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THE
PENNY PULPIT:

A Collection

OF

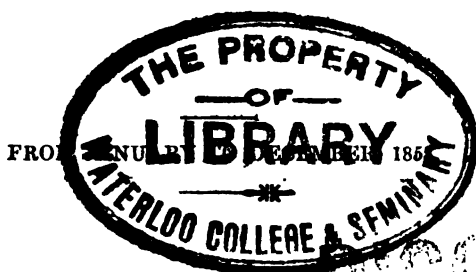
ACCURATELY REPORTED SERMONS,

BY

The most eminent Ministers

OF

VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS.



DISCARD

LONDON:

JAMES PAUL, 1, CHAPTER HOUSE COURT,
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WESTMINSTER ABBEY SERMONS.

THE LEPER CLEANSED.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 24, 1858,
BY THE LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD.

"And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."—*MATT. viii. 3.*

My brethren, we read the miracle in which these words occur in the Gospel appointed for to-day, one of the Sundays after Epiphany. These Gospels bring before us, Sunday after Sunday, separate relations of those mighty acts by which our blessed Lord, when he stood amongst us in the flesh, declared to men the glory that was concealed in his humanity. The important fact that his declaration of his glory was made in this way is a lesson well worthy of every one of us considering with all attention; because, observe what it is, my brethren. It is as if some mighty prince had descended amongst his people unknown, in a temporary disguise, in order to see what were their wants and their sufferings, and then had manifested his true character amongst them in this way—by his liberality being larger, his sympathy more complete, his kindness to every sufferer greater than that which any other man had ever manifested. This was the way in which the Lord, when He veiled His glory, manifested it amongst those that met Him upon earth. He was the sufferer's Friend. He went about doing good, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And, my brethren, if there was no other lesson than this in this passage of God's word, surely it would be a great lesson for such as we are, because every one of us, I suppose, who has passed at all beyond the stage of the earliest youth, knows in his own experience that the condition of man in this world is, for the most part, a condition of suffering; that it is so with every one of us; that there is hardly a heart of one that has passed his youth which rings altogether sound; there is a crack somewhere, and harsh dissonance when you try it. We may not make a show of our sufferings; we may not, mendicant like, go about the world claiming sympathy for them; but we have every one of us got our own pang, some sleeping spasm of sorrow, which we know well enough is ready to be

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called up into active exercise by almost any accident of life. How many of us can remember the time when we have turned away, spirit-saddened men for life, from some vault, from some green grave in some churchyard, to trace the rest of our life through this world in comparative loneliness. Or, if it is not so with us, there is the secret sorrow somewhere, some child that is an anxiety or a weariness, some pang in the body, or some shudder in the soul. My brethren, is it not a lesson for men passing, as we are, a broad stream of life such as is gathered into this cathedral to-night—is it not a lesson for such, that the Son of God, when He came down amongst us and stood amongst us as the Virgin-born, manifested forth his glory in this way, that He was the sufferer's Friend, and sympathized in very deed with every one that came to Him in his trouble?

But then this is not the whole lesson; this lies upon the surface; if you would enter into the heart of this passage you must dwell upon it, and go far deeper into it. Let me, then, call your attention to some of the details which set before us the full richness of this lesson.

This man, to whom Jesus put forth his hand in order that He might heal him, was a leper, one suffering under, perhaps, the most horrible and most loathsome form of disease to which the human frame was ever incident—a disease which is described by contemporaries as possessing almost every aggravation of horror which disease can possibly possess, suffering unknown, loathsomeness to all around, an end of the most miserable character, the limbs dropping off one after another, and altogether incurable by man. Now, this man that met the Lord was full, we read, of this disease.

To enter into the fulness of the lesson, observe, first, my brethren, what disease is. It is a part of the first sentence, the execution of which sin brought upon man: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;" because disease, in every case, is the first invasion, the first step in the body of that of which death is the full accomplishment. But then disease, although it is this, must not be regarded by us as a simple evil. Far from it. Disease, in the first place, is a lengthening out of the preparation of death. How far more horrible would it be, as every one of us can feel, if there was no such thing as disease preparatory to death, if every dying man dropped down in the middle of his strength suddenly a lifeless corpse! How great a kindness and mercy has the Lord mingled with chastisement, in giving disease as a preparation for death! How many a soul has been saved by this merciful appointment of our Lord, that there should be this forerunner of the last blow!

And then again in another way, is disease a merciful appointment, and it is this I want you especially to notice, because it is what appears upon this passage of Scripture. Disease is a shadow cast upon the body of the tree of the inner evil of sin. Now, every one of us who knows himself, or knows his brother, knows that it is hard enough to make people believe the truth of the evil of that sin which is within them; and, my brethren, if there was no such thing as disease, how incomparably harder it would be for us to believe it! Disease is a manifest imperfection; it is that which we cannot deny; it is that which

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makes every one of us feel its presence and acknowledge its reality; and so it is a perpetual reminder to us that there has passed upon our nature this transition from perfectness to imperfection; it is an argument none can altogether resist telling him there has passed upon his nature, and upon his spirit, and upon his soul, that of which all that he sees cast outwardly upon the body is in every single man the shadow. Well, now, that which all disease is in this way intended by God to be, that the leprosy was specially; it was selected by God Himself to be, as it were, an acted out parable of this inward evil. The treatment of leprosy under the law which God gave by Moses marks it as possessing this character. And you must remember that this leper was a Jew, and our blessed Lord when he stood amongst men, was under the Jewish law, and therefore it was He Himself, a son of Abraham, meeting this other Jew, under the conditions and with the knowledge which the law of Moses gave to them. Now, the law of Moses treated leprosy always in this way. Remember what it led to—the separation from the congregation of the uninfected. Not, mind you, because there was anything infectious in leprosy. It seems perfectly plainly established, that it was not communicable from one to another by any of the ordinary modes in which infectious diseases are communicated. Every where, in those countries where the law of Moses did not extend, the leper was admitted freely into all societies. We find a leper conversing with the king of Assyria, and we find a leper commanding the armies of the king of Assyria. We find no fear of the disease spreading from one to another. It was not, therefore, as an sanitary regulation that this was laid down, and the Jews must have known that it was in order that it might impress upon their minds, that the evil, of which this was the external mark, did exclude those whom it possessed from the company of God's pure creation, and so the whole treatment of it was the treatment of death. The leper was not allowed to touch another; he kept his lip covered as in perpetual mourning for himself, as one already dead. The leper, when through God's mercy he was cleansed, had to go through a course of purification which one who had touched a dead body went through. The same course of purification, with hyssop, and with ashes, and the scarlet wool, was enacted for him as for one that had touched the dead. God taking this one signal form of disease, in order to stamp upon the feelings of that sensual people this great truth, that moral impurity, of which this was the external shadow, did part from the company of the holy the being that it possessed.

Now then you see this man, possessed by this evil, full of it, meets the Lord. Mark what it is that our Lord is doing: He is showing, as in an acted parable, the way in which He deals with the conscious sinner. The man comes to him, and worships Him, and says to Him "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." It was a great utterance of faith. It was the first leper, as we gather from St. Mark's account, whom our Lord had ever healed. The leprosy was a disease incurable, and how was the man enabled to believe that the Lord, whose power was veiled in the likeness of flesh, was master of this disorder? Doubtless, my brethren, the vehemence

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of his desire added strength to the weakness of his faith. Doubtless, it was the suffering of that disorder which drove him from his doubts, and brought him to the feet of Him, that could cure him. He came with a strong faith, although he had but an indefinite apprehension of the character of Him to whom he came; for mark the words, "*Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*" He had so small a measure, as yet, of the knowledge of the love of the Son of Man, that though he was able to believe his power he still had, doubts about his readiness to heal. But he cast himself before Him.

And now mark how our Lord treats him. Remember, it was absolutely forbidden for any Jew to touch a leper; it at once conveyed ceremonial uncleanness to him who even accidentally had done it. The man polluted by that touch was shut out from the congregation of the people of the Lord, until he had gone through the appointed purifications. But what does our Lord do? He puts forth his hand—although the prayer was not for the putting forth of the hand, but for the cleansing from the disease—he puts forth his hand, and touches him, saying "*I will, be thou clean.*" And why does He do this? Remember how careful He was to observe the law in all things; how He paid tribute rather than cause scandal; how in all things He came to fulfil, and not to destroy the law. Why therefore does He in this way touch this leprous man contrary to the law? Because, as I have said to you, He was not only healing that one sick man, but He was, as in a parable for all times, for us this night, declaring to men what was the mode in which He healed, and that He was the healer of humanity.

Here, my brethren, are the two lessons we are taught. One, that He was incapable of pollution; that whilst bearing our new flesh, whilst having taken from his Virgin mother our very nature, whilst being incarnate, whilst being man as truly, as really as the very weakest and the most tempted of us is man this night—He was yet incapable of being reached by that pollution which infected all the rest of the race; and so, secondly, that from Him, the fount of purity, from Him, the very man from Him having our nature Himself, having united it in his own person to the eternal and glorious Godhead,—that from Him the new man should be derived, that which we needed and which He could give,—the help, the strength, the deliverance, from pollution, which pollution touched Him not, though He handled the unclean and from Himself conveyed cleansing to it.

Now, my brethren, here is the parable of this miracle; and I said to you, at first, that the lesson would have been sufficient for us, if it had only been, that we sufferers in this vale of sorrow, had each one of us in him a Friend who would sympathize with us, and never refuse to let us lean upon him our heart of sadness. But I say to you, that here is a greater lesson still; for, my beloved brethren, we are all sufferers—are we not all also sinners? Is not the leprosy upon us? why, that eprosy, by one of those most remarkable laws, was often times transmitted from father to son. That was the case, you remember with the prophet's greedy servant, Gehazi; when he went forth a leper white as snow, he was to hand on the

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curse to his children after him. And even so is it with us lepers; born lepers, lepers because sprung from lepers, the taint upon our inmost nature, the taint of the evil upon our soul and upon our spirit. Do you doubt it, my brethren? Does not every one of you, if you dare to look, see and know that the stain is within himself? Is it not round about us? For how long the religion of Christ has been preached within this metropolis of ours, and what is the state of things amongst us still? Is it not as if that other curse, the leprosy upon the wall, had broken out amongst us Christians? Are not houses of abomination multiplied in this great capital? Do not our streets swarm with the ministers and the enticers of iniquity? Have not we read that second lesson that we read to-night, time after time in our churches, and yet can we walk home this night from church, amidst a Christian people, without having every moral sense shocked by the abundant evil which throngs our thoroughfares? What have we been doing, my beloved brethren? What have we been doing in our legislation, whether right or wrong, as to marriage, declaring that Christian people are so sunk in sin amongst us, that there must be facilities for putting asunder those whom God hath made one? I ask you is not the leprosy plain? And can any one stand up and say it is not in himself? Well, then, my beloved brethren, is not this the message of all messages, that there is One still amongst us that can heal the leper? There is no good covering it. No doubt in the old dispensation, when the discovered leper was cast out of the company and of the society of his family, many a man in the beginning of the disorder was tempted to cover it, and did cover it; but the leprosy was there. Covering did not cure it. And there is many a man who goes about this world, covering up his secret leprosy, covering it with religious phrases, covering it with zeal for certain doctrines, covering it with zeal for certain religious observances with forms and ceremonies and the like, covering up, but not curing the leprosy. And who can cure it for us? Remember, my brethren, the teaching, in passing, that it shuts out the soul that it possesses from the company of the pure. Is not this the question of questions for every one of us, if we would only dare to face it,—“Who will cure me of my leprosy? Who will say to me, ‘I will, be thou clean?’”

Brother lepers, here is the message of Him who has come down amongst us in likeness of our flesh, that He may do this work for us—come down, even as He came down when He met this man—come down from the mountain, from the mount of teaching, yea, from the mountain of spoken benediction—come down amongst us and taken our very flesh, in order that He may touch us. And so He does touch one and another. From that body of his, there still goes out healing; from that human nature of his, imparted to one and another, when they feel their leprosy, and come to Him for cleansing; yea, my brethren, to the most unclean, there goes out from Him this power of healing and this perfect cleansing, and still it is by his touch. Hearing about Him won't do; talking about Him won't do; knowing about Him won't do. Is there one amongst you who knows that he is leprous, that some lust has long tyrannized over him, who has groaned out his, “I cannot get rid of this evil, which clings to me like a second nature; would to God I had

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never given way to it; but I cannot get rid of it?" My brother, here is the power that can set thee free: not mere hearing of Him, not talking of Him, not making a profession of being his, but reaching to his touch; and thou canst reach to it. Oh! my brethren, who can tell what that touch is? Who can speak of it? Who can convey to another what it is? No, not even those whom He has touched can speak of it worthily. I know that I cannot. Would to God that He would open my lips to speak of it this night to some one amongst you; to speak of that change when the deliverance comes, when through every current of impure blood, the healing virtue flows, when there is the giving back, to the fallen son of the fallen Adam, the new life of the new man;—not healing him here, not cleansing this sore, not delivering him from this infirmity, but flowing a fountain of renovation through the whole purified being. And, my brethren, do you doubt that He will do this for you? Is there any one of you to night who doubts for a single moment that you may receive the same healing which this leper at the foot of that mountain found? Why do you doubt it? Do you say it is because you doubt whether He can make you clean? No, my brethren, look at the lepers He has cleansed. It is not now as it was with this man. See the multitudes to whom He has given life; see the impure to whom He has given back their flesh, like the flesh of a little child; see the miser whom He has made generous; the suspicious whom He has made loving; the peevish and the irritable whom He has made to bear the burden of others. See, every where around you, in the Church of the redeemed, that his touch can make the leper clean.

And then, do you say, "Yes; but will He do it?" Ah! brethren, listen to his own words. Hear Him say to you to-night, in the parable of this cleansed leper, "I will; be thou clean." His will is that every one of you should be cleansed. If it were not so, my beloved, why did He come down from heaven? Why did He knit, in unity with his Divine self, the flesh which He took from his Virgin mother? Why did He lie in that cradle at Bethlehem? Why did He bear the spitting, and the scourging, and the crowning with thorns, and the bitter cross, and the shame of death? Why, if it was not true, as He declares, that He willeth not the death of a sinner, but that He should turn to him and live? Why, if he does not say to you to-night, in the midst of your soul-leprosy, "I will; be thou clean?"

Or, is it that you say, "This may apply to other sinners, but how can it apply to me, so lost, so ruined, so wretched. I had a good education, I had parents who cared for me, and I have thrown all away, and chosen iniquity." This man was full of leprosy. Think of that—full of leprosy. There was not one part of that aching body of his but what the disease possessed. Look at thy soul, and set it side by side with his body full of leprosy; and he was so, in order that thou mightest have hope.

But perhaps you say, again, "Yes, if I could but cry to Him; yes, if I could but believe thoroughly in Him; yes, if I could but come to Him, as I would 'ain come, He might perchance heal me." But mark again, this man came with his doubts and

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his fears. He said, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." I dare not say which is the worst unbelief, to doubt his power, or to doubt his will. But this man came as no perfect believer, no perfect beggar for his cure; he did but go because his sense of disease drove him, he did but go with a trembling and doubting expectation that perchance he might get healed. And thou canst go so. Only go to Him because He does touch.

For see the healing: the man was healed immediately; and so it is even now. Of the guilt of thy sins thou art healed, when the Christ toucheth thee. Of the power of thy sins, in its measure, thou art healed by that touch; and He has provided that thou mayest go again and again for that touch. What does He do in his Word? What does He do in all the ordinances of his Church? What does He do in the blessed Sacrament of the Holy Communion, but come and touch the penitent man with that life-giving and cleansing touch of his? And are not these open to thee? Is it not of his love that this very building has been opened, and thou gathered this night amongst the company, in order that thou mightest meet thy Lord, and hear of his touch, and cast thyself before Him, the Lord of tenderness, as well as the Lord of power? Oh! my beloved brethren, trifle not with such opportunities as these.

Remember, I beseech you, the lesson that leprosy is death, and that leprosy of the soul is the death of the eternal part of us. Remember, I pray you, that leprosy shut out the Jew from the company of the accepted, and that the uncleansed soul must be shut out from the company of the perfected creatures of God. There is no escape from the conclusion; and so I say to you, in the name of the Lord, trifle not with this deliverance. Leprosy is death, is separation, is eternal suffering, is the death of the soul in its eternal parting from God, which itself is the very concentration of misery. Then, my brethren, go straight to Him, and go to no other. Go to Him, the Fountain of strength. Do not rest in word, do not take up with form, do not trust to feelings, do not trust in any particular religious profession, but go to Him. Find Him out as a person, a living Saviour. Take thy soul to Him, that wounded, sin-sick soul of thine; pierce through the crowd; it is a work that must be done alone; thou must go to Him thou must say to Him, "Thou knowest my sickness, Lord, stretch out thy hand and give me healing," and never let Him go until He blesses thee. There is this truth, which every one of you, my beloved brethren, may know in his own experience. The Lord will meet you. Press only to Him, and He will draw you to Himself. His love is infinite; his power of healing infinite; his cross of power almighty. Hasten to Him in the inmost recesses of your heart. Take your own lust to Him. Look round about in your family; look round about in your house, in your lodging, in your daily life; see where the leprosy has broken out. Is it in that sinful companion of thine? Is it in thy having chosen the life of licentiousness, and not the life of chastened and obedient holiness? Find out where the leprosy has broken out in thyself, and take that thy spot to the Lord, the Healer, and do it to-night, for who can say that you shall see to-morrow's sun rise? Who can say but that to-night, for the last time for thee, He

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comes down from the mount of benediction, and stands beside thee in the valley of thy sin, that he may give thee cleansing ?

Oh ! then, this night before you leave these walls, before there be the danger of a distracting thought, set yourself,—as each one of you can, by the wonderful power with which He has endued your soul—set yourself alone with Him in secret, mental prayer, and, bringing before Him your sin, your weakness, your infirmity, the grace you lack, cast yourself down, as this leper did of old, and worship Him in your heart, and say to Him, “Lord, I know thou wilt ; Lord, I know thou can’st ; Oh, Saviour of the lost, reach forth thine hand, and say to me, thy lost one, ‘I will ; be thou clean.’” Put this prayer up to Him from the bottom of your soul : “O Saviour, who by thy cross and precious blood hast redeemed us, hear us, and save us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.”

WESTMINSTER ABBEY SERMONS.

SALVATION TO THE UTTERMOST.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 31, 1858,

BY THE REV. J. C. P. EYRE, M.A.

"Wherefore he is able to save also them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."—HEB. vii. 25.

THE note of inference which commences this verse summons our attention, in the first place, to the context—"wherefore." This word, just like the porous stem which channels the sap of life from the root to the bursting flower, carries life and perpetuity into the blessed assurance of the Redeemer's ability to save to the uttermost, by linking it to the vital truth from which it is a necessary deduction. "But this man," the Apostle writes, "because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood;" that is, a priesthood which is not transmissive,—a priesthood which can never pass into the hands of another person—a priesthood which admits of no succession, inasmuch as he who holds its dignity and responsibility never dies. He hung as a vicarious sacrifice upon the cross; and He now sits as a "priest upon his throne." On that altar of shame, and agony, and blood, the Lamb of God was slain, an atoning victim; and so salvation was made possible, as a gift to be universally offered. And in the royalties of his priesthood is he now upon that throne of glory, that the gift, offered universally, may be received and realised, individually, by all who come unto God by Him. He was the victim atoning in death, and He is the priest interceding in life; because, in that marvel of mingled wisdom and love, the scheme of human redemption, there was no victim worthy of the priest, and there was no priest worthy of the victim, but He who combined both in his own person. The working out of his great salvation in that hour of passion and shame on earth was perfect, "for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." And the application of his great salvation to each earnest penitent by his life, in heaven, must be also perfect, that He may be able to save to the uttermost. His death was a real death, once for all; and his life must be an endless life of real intercession for each who rest upon Him. Is it so? Is his intercession as perfect through an endless life, as his sacrifice was perfect through a real death? Does the application of the benefits of his cross, to this or that yearning, aching heart, lie in other hands than his own? Is his priesthood in heaven unchangeable or without succession?

Now, mark the contrast which the writer draws in the context, to set all fears at rest. Under the Jewish dispensation, there were priests, that is, men appointed, called, and consecrated by God himself, who were to stand and transact, or mediate, by sacrifice and intercession, between the holy Creator and his offending creatures: "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifice for sins; who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is beset with infirmity." This ordinance, like every other part of the Jewish ceremonial, was pictorial and prophetic. It was pictorial because it placed before the very senses of men the lesson of their guiltful need; and it taught them that a priest of Divine selection must stand with sacrifice between them and their God, who willeth not that any should perish. It was a visible prophecy, too, which looked

towards a coming reality, of which Aaron's office was but a faint shadow; for the priesthood of the Lord Jesus is indeed a reality; no shadow, no figure, but a fact. His death as a victim was a *real* death, and no less so is his life in heaven of intercession a *real* life. Mark, then, well, O ye Hebrews! says the Apostle, "The law made nothing perfect;" it was but a shadow of things to come; "but the bringing in of a better hope did," and the priesthood under that your law, and the priesthood under this scheme of a better hope, have the same essential difference—the difference of imperfection on the one hand, and perfection on the other. And then remember, O ye Hebrews, that as frail dying men were made priests under your law, the priesthood was liable to constant change, and passed necessarily and quickly from the hand of one man to another. Not so in the case of Christ. In the upper sanctuary, made without hands, he has a priesthood subject to no succession; wherefore, His work of passion and death can never fail of application to all who come unto God by Him; wherefore, no case can arise in this world, shrouded in the curse of sin and death, for which there is no sympathy, no virtue of grace and merit in Him; wherefore, we have no intercessor, saint, or angel, to canonize and seek, through fear of deficiency or indifference, or change in Him; wherefore, there is no anxiety whether a stranger may succeed in office to him, who, by experience, is able to pity and "succour them that are tempted;" wherefore, we, who have entrusted our hope to Him, are safe for ever: His office passes not from hand to hand: from generation to generation he lives for evermore—lives to make intercession.—"Wherefore, he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him."

But, now, turn from the word of inference which introduces the text, to the precious truth which it plainly states. A Gospel, a glad tidings, is indeed here. Oh! I know not the history of each man or woman in the throng now gathered in the sight of God, on the pavement of this noble abbey; I know not what differences of mind or circumstance, of sorrow or joy, of want or wealth, exist between you; I know not the burden which is lying on any heart, or the depth of selfishness, and sin, and agony in which evil passions, working out their strength in evil habits, may have steeped it; I know not whether one may be hopeless in his remorse, or another in the bondage of the fear of death, or a third an outcast from all the sympathies of friendly eyes and loving hearts;—aye, perhaps an outcast in her own bitter judgment upon self, the birthright of chaste affections and self-respect, and an undefiled body, bartered for a mess of pottage, sold under some vile bribe; I know not who may be the slave, either in its refined or grosser forms, of that worldliness which is enmity against God; I know not whether there be before me now some stricken and sorrowing spirit who dares not venture upon a hope of peace, because, though there be mercy and restoration for all, yet not for him, against light, and early religious training, and titles of better thoughts, and secret and repeated strivings of the spirit of grace, of all sinners as he thinks the chiefest; or whether there be here some downcast child of God, whom unbelief has made sad, or trial crushed, or compliance with the subtle whispers of the tempter left to "walk in darkness, where there is no light;"—Oh, who shall tell the secrets of all hearts which are before me? who can know the weariness, the woe, the guilt, which lies as a sore burden, intolerable on that man or woman who has worshipped beside him? And what matters this ignorance to the preacher? He has in trust to dispense to all a medicine which can heal all sicknesses, a Gospel which can bring restoration, and hope, and joy to any convicted, fearful, suffering heart, a specific for any case of threatening death. God's remedy can meet and satisfy any necessity. It is for all classes, all characters, all ages in life or ages in sin, because, my text says, it is a remedy to the *utmost*. And in this conviction we declare it, in all courage and hope. It must answer for the end whereunto He hath sent it: "Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Note well, and ponder, and pray over this plain and positive assurance.

I. First, then, Jesus is able to save. And what is salvation? We cannot answer this question fully, unless we knew the sad evil and demerit of sin, and the extent to which its incurable defilement has spread into the very well-spring of the responsible creature's being, in which the will resolves, the affections have their secret outgoings, and the conscience sits as judge;—unless we understand the value of the soul, the terrors and resources of God's punitive justice, the duration of eternity, the agonies of the endless loss in outer darkness, and the high and holy joy of the glory to be revealed. This we know, that salvation is that gift, that exercise and process of divine mercy in

Christ, which meets and removes all the penalties and results of human sin. Just as pity implies misery, mercy supposes guilt, and salvation is deliverance from the sentence of God's justice upon guilt. And it is written, "According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" that is the gift and exercise of Divine mercy supposes also sinfulness of nature; and salvation is deliverance from this natural state of opposition to God's holiness, through the baptism and renewing of his grace. Salvation is a new state of reconciliation and relationship between the sinner and his God, and a new state of character and resemblance before Him in consequence. It implies a change of condition, accompanied and evidenced by a change of will and affection. It is redemption from the curse of violated law, and restoration to the grace and satisfaction of parental love, and renovation after the image of him who was made a curse for us to win that redemption, and opened out the way to the welcome and the safety of that restoration. Regard the word in a legal sense, and it is release from the punishment which, as the sanction and strength of law, is due to sin. Regard the word in a moral sense, and it is a release from the inward power of evil—or the light of truth breaking in upon the mind—the power of truth bringing peace and yet sensitiveness to the conscience—the love of truth having the government over the will and the affections; *i. e.*, it is the intercession of the Redeemer becoming a realized fact in the history of a man. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth."

It is one thing, by the sheer exercise of royal clemency, to arrest the process of law, giving free pardon to the criminal when just passing to its uttermost exactment, and to place him again amidst the unchallenged by justice, and the free. But it is quite another and far more difficult task for benevolence to cast out the unclean spirit, to discipline to a very death the evil habit, to reclaim and reform the character, when vice has taken such a mastery and governed so long that it has the force of nature, is in the very core, and, like a poison in the blood, works in every part and organ of the man's being, and to bring the man onward to that calm of conscience, that freedom from all fear, that consciousness of guilelessness and integrity which speak to us through the frank countenance, the honest look, the answering eye which shrinks not from our fixed glances, and the manly open words which are the tokens of felt, firm, independent uprightness. What profits liberty through the suspension of justice, without reformation through a godly discipline and influence? The man will be again your scourge, and his own misery and curse. You have saved the criminal, not when you have merely released him from the sentence upon his crime, but when you have won him from the love and habit of it. You have restored the fallen, not when you have merely rescued her to a safe keeping from the path of the destroyer, but when you have checked, and quenched, and trampled out the last spark of the vile lust which the spoiler fuelled and fanned by the stimulants of pleasant temptation. Thus, salvation is not merely the deliverance of the guilty from the arrest and sentence of justice, but it is the deliverance of the man himself from his own former self. It is both purity and pardon; remission of sin and release from it; safeness from the wrath to come, and a title to heaven; but more than this, "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light." It is both righteousness in a forensic sense—righteousness reckoned unto us for justification; and righteousness in a moral sense—righteousness in conformity of man's character to God's will. In a word, salvation, like binal stars which, though they seem as one to unhelped eyes, the telescope proves to be double bodies, revolving round each other, or rather round one common centre of force unknown to us—salvation may be resolved into two united gifts, two stages of the same life united to each other, and shining upon each other, while both have their one common centre in Christ. One is but the bud, and the other the flower of the same plant of Paradise; one is but the dawn, and the other just the noon of the same endless day. One is a state of grace, the other a state of glory. Grace is the earthly part of salvation; glory is the heavenly part. Grace is the assurance of pardon and the pledge of it; glory is the enjoyment of pardon and the proofs of it. Grace is the spring-tide of holiness and happiness, the sowing time of struggle; glory is the autumn-tide of holiness and happiness, the reaping time of their perfection. In a word, salvation is pardon, peace, and purity to a human spirit in this life; and holiness, happiness, and glory, perfect and eternal, in the life to come.

This salvation is in Christ; "He is able to save," my text says. He has won the gift of salvation for us, and He has the will to give what He has won; that is, His

ability to save is *official* and *moral*. He has won the right to exercise this ability, inasmuch as He is able to save as mediator. I do not now explain the mystery of that marriage bond which knits into a perfect oneness, and yet allows a perfect distinctness between the human and the divine nature in the person of the Lord. You accept this mystery as a fact, as a truth established, though not expounded. On this union does the virtue of his sacrifice as an atoning victim, and the virtue of his advocacy as an interceding priest, depend. He is thus the "Daysman," or reconciler, who can "lay his hands on both parties,"—who by his divinity can lay the hand of his power upon the Judge, who by his humanity can lay the hand of his sympathy and merit, as a suffering Saviour, upon man. The human nature was the priestly robe He took for sacrifice and intercession. It was upon this that the "precious ointment" of the Holy Ghost, poured forth without measure on the edge of Jordan, did run down, even to the very skirts of his clothing, consecrating to the work of salvation his humanity in its entirety. Christ was originally free, the Author of law, above all law; but He would be in the place, in the relationship of the creature to law. This was his voluntary resolve. Hence He took unto Himself our nature; He became a man, really, federally. That body and soul which He assumed, that humanity was a responsible creature, under the creature's power of service, and the creature's capability of suffering. In that body He served, He suffered, He wrought out a perfect righteousness, as our representative.

All that measure of intelligent worship which a rational creature owed to his Creator, all that measure of child-like trust which a dependent creature owed to his Benefactor, all that mental and active obedience which a responsible creature owed to his sovereign God,—all this measure of worship, of dependence, of obedience, to the uttermost extent to which they could be yielded by a moral, rational, dependent creature, under the limits of his nature, with that unique entirety to which all his perfect faculties, unweakened, as they were unstained by sin, could rise, and his organs express, Jesus fulfilled, wrought out before man, brought unto God as a sponsor or mediator for man. This was his human righteousness. But there was a further obligation in law. The race of responsible creatures with whom He had taken alliance, had not only failed, but transgressed; and so all that measure of suffering which the guilty creature owed to the strict justice of a Holy Judge must be endured, and this suffering was exhausted to the uttermost; He made his soul a sacrifice for sin, and it was sustained in life upon the fiery altar until He could say, "Father, I have glorified thee on earth; I have *finished* the work which thou gavest me to do."

And now, my brethren, mark how his ability to save came. Into his perfect human righteousness, into his perfect self-sacrifice, his divine nature, by virtue of its union with his human nature—union which held through every stage of life and death—did throw all that infinite wealth and virtue of suffering, of effectualness, of power, of merit, which were in the very essence of its being. And so salvation is his rightful gift, because he has made it possible, and removed all hindrances for its possession. He is able to save, because he has been called to be a Saviour, and has brought into his office all the qualities which it demanded,—a human nature in which to serve and suffer, and his own divine nature, as the everlasting Son of the Father, which should carry its own perfectness into every act and word to which it was pledged, and given by the humanity with which it was allied. He is able to save, because he has obtained for us by his death the gift of a new life, quickened in man by his Spirit, sealed by his sacraments, and nurtured by his Word and ordinances. By the mystery of his nature then, and the merit of his work, he is able to save.

And he has a *moral* ability, I mean the ability of heart, of inclination, and will. How much hangs upon the will to help! Without the will, the power lies dumb under all appeal, dormant before all opportunity. The poor leper felt this,—“Lord, if thou *wilt*, thou canst make me clean;” and that leper found that the ability of right and will, of power and purpose, did indeed meet in him. Nay, he travailed for and won the power, only because his heart was settled in the purpose to save. Note his words, “Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest;” “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Note his deeds. Facts are decisive; but the time would fail me to tell of Matthew, and Zaccheus, and Mary of Magdala, and the woman that had been a sinner; of demons sitting in their right mind at his feet; of Peter, snatched as a brand which had

already almost become alight in the burning; of Saul of Tarsus, and the impure Corinthians, and the idolatrous men of Ephesus, and the fierce gaoler, and the gentle Lydia, and the judge Dionysius, and the slave Philemon; all of whom are patterns to them which shall hereafter believe in his name, *that he is able to save.*

And then, once more, consider the purpose and practice of his endless life. "He is able to save," says our text, "seeing he ever liveth to make intercession." Where, in what far off star, in what local and material sanctuary he doth in his human nature keep the state of heavenly royalty, and sit as "a priest upon his throne," I know not. There are many mansions in the Father's universe, and in one most fitted for his glory does he now abide, expecting the promised kingdom. It is not necessary for us to speculate, whether, in the very accents of that familiar voice which, by the simple utterance of her name, did awaken up such recollections of the past in Mary at the sepulchre, that breathless in joy and surprise, she could only cry, "Rabboni, Master,"—that is, whether in his human voice he makes intercession. Why not? for he is clothed there in the same flesh and bones which ate, and spake, and moved, and could be touched by the Apostles, and was like their own in all things but its bloodlessness and independence of the laws of matter. He is clothed in this still, but it is a *real* intercession, an intercession which, by the tenderness and experience of our merciful high priest, extends to all our important interests and wants. He was Love—speaking, pitying, labouring, suffering on earth, and He is Love still—pitying, serving, pleading in heaven. The ransom which he paid upon the cross has reality and virtue, by the application of its benefits through his prayer upon the throne. He is in the midst of it "as a lamb slain," as one who remembers his passion, and who perfects its results in the individual soul by his activities there. Witness the marvels of the day of Pentecost; witness the noble army of martyrs and confessors who have passed to heaven, like Manoah's angel, in a shroud of fire, "doing wondrously" in agony, because they did know his sympathy, did taste his gracious consideration, did find his prayers mingling with their own in the consciousness of faith, in the experience of replies, did see a form like unto the Son of God walking with them in the burning fiery furnace. So that, like the old Fathers of the Church, they could call their fetters bracelets of beauty and honour, and their shame glory, and their cross a "light yoke." And are there no witnesses to this great truth here? Oh! I trust that there are many, many who have made trial of his ability, many who, by the yearnings and actings of their own heart, have been desirous to put that ability to the test, who have ventured confidence in his merit, who have cast themselves upon his mercy, never doubting his sympathy and will, but simply saying, "He is able to save," because "having died unto sin once, he ever liveth to make intercession." Why doubt, sin-stricken, harrassed spirit within me, whether he can save thee? Make the venture, cling to him, and if perish you must, perish there. But perish, how can this be? For note the further assurance in the text, "He is able to save to the *utmost*."

II. What limitation dares one place on the word "utmost?" Regard it first as a note of time, as stretching from the first moment to the last moment, in that parenthesis of a few thousand years for man's probation and education, in which is laid the scene of the earthly history of his race. He is able to save from one extreme of time to the other; from its birth to its death; from its dawn to its evening in the day of salvation. Count backwards times, epochs—pass through the dark valley of the past, to him who first trod amidst its shadows, and tasted its chill and cheerlessness, immediately he fell. Count forward times, epochs. Nay, that we cannot do, for who dare build on hours and days which may never be? But, still, pass onward, in thought, to the utmost moment and ministry of grace, when trial and opportunity are just about to give way for ever to glory and reward,—pass in thought to Him who will be the utmost and last to make test of, and rejoice in Christ's salvation in that last hour of the world, when, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold," and the very virgins that are to go out to meet him who comes for a bridal day with his redeemed spouse, shall fall into slumbers and keep no vigils for his advent—pass to Him who will be the last exception to the multitude, the last living contrast in the general death—from that past utmost, when the first promise gave hope to the trembling pair, to that last utmost, when the angels will sing their last song over the last sinner that repenteth—and between these two extremes in salvation's day, through shifting dispensations and varying lights, through the twilight of that by-gone Judaism, and in each stage of the

advancing brightness of the Christian church, "shining more and more unto a perfect day," there are, there will be, tokens of the same experience, the experience of his ability to save. Look backward to the time when the morning of the day of salvation revealed had scarce broken, and men walked by the twinkling stars of type and promise, and in the moonlight of the pascal feasts. To Him as the Sun of righteousness, to arise with healing in his wings—to his cross, as the common centre of life, patriarch and prophet looked. Some did stand eagerly and confidently on the tiptoe of hope, and upon the highest hill of promise, and had visions, on the other side of the horizon, which careless spirits did not see, such as Abraham, who saw Christ's day, and who seeing it was glad. If we rejoice in one able to save who *has* come, they did also hope, at times almost against hope, for one able to save who *would* come. Lift up the veil of prophecy! See the distant view of the latter days! "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God." And why? "He shall be lifted up, and all men shall be drawn unto him." And thus, for the putting the uttermost shock into the garners of God, "to accomplish the number of his elect, and hasten his kingdom," "He is able to save the uttermost."

Regard the word as bearing upon the distinctions in the classes and civilisations of men. What differences, mental, moral, social, obtain amongst mankind, yea, what differences physical! What a chasm between European refinement and savage rudeness—between the enlightenment of the West and the darkness which is in the corners of the far East—between the child of modern civilisation and the child of the islet of the South Pacific! But the Gospel of the Lord can bridge over that chasm; and, amidst all distinctions of climate, of colour, and civilisation, bring out the exact features of a common brotherhood,—the unity of idea which runs through the new creation,—the moral creation of the Church,—just as a unity of idea also runs through all the classes of the old—the organic creation—that is the unity of the Spirit, in the bonds of a common spiritual life, which can bind man to man from the extremest point of social life, just because it is the Gospel of Jesus, who is "able to save to the uttermost." And so we say, Oh! Church of our fathers, Church of our choice, "lift up thy voice, lift it up, be not afraid," proclaim every where that thy Master is "able to save to the uttermost." No matter the depth of that darkness in which the Ruler of the darkness of this world may have shrouded souls, no matter how vile or how fascinating the image or the ideal of the god, how rude or how rich the altar, no matter how degraded the poor victim who worships before them, the Gospel of the cross can work its marvels of light into the grossest darkness; and altar and god shall moulder in the dust, and the poor slave they enchained be raised to the liberty and dignity of a child of the Holy Father in heaven, by the power which is promised to the simple teaching of the truth, which is not for man, but for mankind,— "Jesus is able to save to the uttermost."

And so we have but one message for all the shades of classes and character which chequequer the face of our social life at home. To the rich, that we may humble and hallow wealth, to the poor, that we may comfort and cheer and hallow poverty, we preach Christ crucified,— "Jesus able to save to the uttermost," because, before and above all other moral forces which can be applied to raise, or govern, or educate for the highest progress the lower classes in the social scale, or unite in fraternal responsibilities and in links of love all classes—because, above and beyond all human forces, we just believe in Christ "the power of God," and above and beyond all other sources of human enlightenment and knowledge, we just believe in Christ "the wisdom of God."

But individual life, the history of each man's life has its uttermost point, its crisis for eternity, its awful instant, when there is but a step between the man and death. Oh! in that awful moment, can the soul that has cast Him aside wilfully for so many years find Him able to save even up to that uttermost? Take an instance; the Bible supplies "one that none may despair, and but one that none may presume." Amidst the reproaches of the crowd and the mad violence of the priests, one voice of prayer, one appeal for mercy reached the ear of the dying Jesus. Partner in crime with him who hung upon the other side of that central cross, he had for some time, as we gather, been a partner in his profane taunts, for it is written, "*They* that were crucified with him reviled him." But a change comes over the hardened criminal. The reviler suddenly rebukes the reviling: "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation, and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our

deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss." Did not the heart open out in these simple words its contrition? did it not take its first glance of hope in the Crucified? There had been no outburst of Deity in those hours of uttermost agony, but mark the *faith* in that cry, "Lord!" mark what humbleness, what conscious unworthiness in that appeal! No great blessing does he venture to sue; it is only, "Remember me!" What beyond could such a vile one ask for, and his recollection, though undeserved, would be enough, "Lord, remember me." Note the hope in that appeal. A poor malefactor, with a cross for his death-bed and racked by pain as the wage of crime, looks forward to a kingdom, and that with desire of remembrance there: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

Brethren, you know how that holy Sufferer forgot his torture before that appeal, and put forth his power and love to save to the uttermost: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." And when agony and the cruelty of the soldiery had wrung out life from the agonized frame, sweetly, sweetly did he fall asleep in Jesus. See the criminal at his very uttermost, pardoned, saved. In the morning a felon in chains, in the evening a saint in white. In the morning handled of soldiers, in the evening nursed by angels. In the morning in the slavery of fierce passions, in the evening in the freedom of heavenly love. In the morning crucified, in the evening crowned. One hour sobbing out his first sigh of sudden penitence; the next hour singing the first song of his endless anthem of praise. Oh, blessed Jesus! When thou wert weak, then thou wert strong; when vanquished by death then thou couldst give life; thou didst take a soul from the cross of a condemned criminal to the throne of a redeemed saint. Therefore, we will proclaim that because thy power doth equal thy love, and thy love doth govern thy power, that thou art "able to save to the uttermost."

Now, once more, is there an uttermost in point of madness and maturity in sin, to which His ability to save cannot reach? Here, again, I appeal to fact in the history of his earthly ministry, which was intended to promise and to illustrate the virtue of his heavenly life. Call to mind the scene in Simon's house. The woman that came softly to his feet, as he sat down at the Pharisee's table, as Luke tells us, was a *sinner*. Vulgar fame and that hard world which deals so harshly with the outcast, because of her lost virtue, and yet smiles upon, and admits into all circles, the mean, selfish, and cowardly creature—almost, to my mind, the most despicable on God's earth, who seduced her by his false flatteries, and then cast aside heedlessly the poor victim, as a child throws away a spoiled plaything—vulgar fame and that hard world, no doubt truly, justly, and with the finger of scorn, had pointed to her, branded her as a sinner. Depend upon it she had tasted the misery of that death in life which is always felt by those who live in sinful pleasure, that sense of degradation, that agony of remorse, that self-hatred, that intense desire to escape from the hated yet continued sin, while all the time escape seemed impossible, hopeless. Depend upon it, too, she had tasted the agony of a woman's broken heart. And, now, Love, Divine Love, had deepened the wounds which human scorn and human cruelty had gashed there, deepened only to heal; and she comes to Jesus. Note her deep humility. The greatest sinner becomes the meekest suppliant—she *stood* at the feet of Jesus. Note well her painful shame—she stood at the feet of Jesus, *behind* him. "And it is not the voice now, but the eyes, that give expression to the heart's fullness"—she stood behind him weeping, and washed his feet with her tears. And she must dry them, too, and she takes her hair for this purpose, as slaves were wont to do, when washing their master's feet. And, then, that touch, draws out her heart to venture upon kissing his feet. And, then, the box of precious ointment is not forgotten, that alabaster box which, if not the wage of iniquity, she had misapplied to vanity and shameful lusts. In her deep reverence and worship she pours the offering upon his head. And whence this humility, these tears, this kiss, this love? Oh! she had already heard words of mercy in the street, and in the byway, from him who is able to save to the uttermost—mercy to her whom hard men and worldly scorn had thrust aside as a poor outcast. If not actually, yet spiritually, she had conversed with him who can bind up broken hearts, and who, as we sung to-night, though he can tell in his majesty the number of the stars, does not scruple to dispense, from his hospital of grace, medicine to heal the sickness of the human spirit. Because she loved much she had much forgiven her. And, thus, under this picture of his tenderness and power, he has bid us write that he is "able to save to the uttermost," to the very uttermost of sin which may have flung us from him as outcasts—to the very

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utmost of remorse, when it has well nigh stiffened us into the death of despair—to the utmost of wickedness, when evil habit is as hard to change as the leopard's spot—to the utmost of indifference, when the conscience seems as deaf to the voice of rebuke as the dead man's ear to the passionate cries of love. I confess, that it seems hopeless to us sometimes that "utmost." We would fain turn aside sometimes and pass where our ministry of truth *can tell*. No, no; never let us shut the door of mercy against a single sinner. The times and the tides of the living waters which give life, wherever they come are not under our control. We dare not speak of remediless obstructions to their flow when God has made none. We watch, and wait, and work, and pray, because Jesus "is able to save to the utmost." And, in all confidence, that the glad tidings may be made the power of salvation to all who hear it, we will proclaim it to all—aye, even to the greatest traitor to conscience and Christ, if we could cross his path, hasting in his remorse like Judas to a hopeless death, or springing from the bridge to find a watery grave in the river stream.

Dear brethren, this is our message to you. And if this power to save to the utmost does not touch you, save you, it is because the limit is not in the Saviour who has the right to exercise it, but in you. The only limit in my text, is this: "He is able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him." To come unto him is to come unto God, for this is the chain of steps in eternal life, "we are Christ's and Christ is God's."

And, then, he who would know, in his own soul, Christ's ability to save, must come to him; of course not actually but spiritually—come unto him in one of those wonderful translations of human spirits which faith accomplishes as, it takes them within the veil, and gives substance to what is hoped for, and evidence of what is unseen,—translations which make a man, as Paul says, to "see Him who is invisible,"—come to Him as the needle to the magnet, drawn by the attraction of his mercy,—come to Him as the disciple to the teacher, learning under his secret teaching,—come to Him as a patient to the physician, to tell of agony and entreat aid,—come to Him as a sinner to his Saviour, yearning for salvation,—come to Him as an angel to his God, reverencing, loving, adoring, serving. Yes, come to him spiritually, as Mary did really, sitting at his feet on choice of the good part,—come to him spiritually, as Nicodemus did really, seeking light upon the inner darkness,—come to Him spiritually, as the penitent woman did really, loving, weeping much, because much had been forgiven her,—come to Him spiritually, as John did really, leaning upon the repose of trust upon his bosom and feeding upon his living bread which he gives. "The Spirit and the bride say come." Our ministry is just the invitation, "Come." And the Church in her sacraments and her ordinances, in which the Lord Jesus does most surely abide, says, "Come."

And what mean we by these special services in this noble building, but just to have occasion to say, "Come," to you who, perhaps, have never heard of his ability to "save to the utmost," never heard that there is One upon the throne above, who has remembered you, though all the while you have forgotten him—One who would not have you left in the vineyard of this Christian country fruitless, a cumberer of the ground, waiting for that axe which must be laid some day to the barren root of all dead trees—One who lives to make intercession for them that come unto God by him, that is, for me, for you. Be it so with all of us; be it so with you, my brethren and my sisters in the Lord; and then to you in all time of our tribulation, in that awful utmost, "in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment," He, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,—He, the good Lord who is able to save, will hear your prayers, deliver you as you intreat, and seal that deliverance at once, by granting you peace unspeakable and prophetic of glory.

Exeter Hall Sermons.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 31, 1858,

BY THE

REV. JOSHUA C. HARRISON.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."—LUKE xv. 20.

In the account which is given us of the creation of the world, in the first chapter of Genesis, we read, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." It is in consequence of this resemblance which man bears to his Maker, that he is able to understand God at all; for you will at once perceive that if we were totally unlike our Creator, if we had no attributes in common with Him, He must remain to us for ever unknown. No words could convey to us the remotest idea of what He was, because words are only the signs of things we know; and if there were a world or a being entirely dissimilar to this world and every creature upon it, we should find that language was quite powerless to give us any intelligible description of them. Now, however, we learn from the word of inspiration, that man was formed the likeness of the Eternal; and, learning this, we at once reach the exhilarating conclusion, "Then it is possible for me to know God." Our knowledge, indeed, must still be very imperfect, for the finite can never fully comprehend the Infinite; but He is not veiled in utter darkness; we form some dim notion of his attributes, we do not worship "an unknown God." Wisdom, thought, love, truthfulness, joy, purity, personality, all in measure belong to us; to Him, without and beyond measure; and hence, the higher we rise in intelligence, purity, and love, the more capable do we become of comprehending Him who yet, in the *fulness* of his Godhead, passeth human knowledge.

In like manner, you must have observed that, in the Bible, our earthly relationships are all used as illustrations of the relationship in which God stands to us; and just as among men one and the same person may sustain several distinct and independent relationships, so we find does God. He is Owner, Upholder, Teacher, Ruler, Father, and it is only by combining the various ideas conveyed by such words that we obtain any complete or adequate conception of the relationship which God bears to man. Two of these ideas, however, are perhaps more frequently dwelt on than the rest. He is our *Father*,—for He called us into existence, and naturally looks on us with deepest interest, and feels for us the tenderest love. He is our *Sovereign*,—for He knows that well-being depends on righteousness, and that only as He maintains a law of absolute holiness can creatures constituted as we are be noble or happy. Now, as long his intelligent creatures perfectly observe this law, as long as they are obedient and pure, so long the two

relationships appear quite harmonious; but as soon as disobedience and unholiness arise, the claims of the Judge will clash with the feelings of the Father, and the two, if possible, will need to be reconciled.

This opposition between the demands of the Judge and the Father, when both relationships meet in the same person, has not unfrequently occurred in human governments, in which case, the feelings of the father have perhaps generally triumphed, and justice and law have been dishonoured; but there have been instances in which the demands of law, involving as they do the interests not merely of a family but of a nation, have been felt to be so sacred, that either the father has been merged in the judge or some compromise has been attempted between the two. The history of Brutus, one of the two earliest Roman consuls, is an example of the first kind. For when his own sons, who had been found, with several others, conspiring against the new republic, were brought before him, he sternly asked them whether they could offer any defence for their crimes, and receiving no answer, said to the executioner, "Now it is for you to perform the rest." He would not listen to the pleadings of nature, when duty to the state required him to be firm. And this firmness, we are assured, did more than any thing else to give stability to the recently-formed constitution. In the case of a certain king of the Locrians, we have an example of the second kind, and find that father and judge both insisted on being heard. This king had made a law that the sin of adultery should be punished by the loss of both eyes. The first offender that was discovered, after the passing of this statute, was his own son. His perplexity was very great. To execute the sentence, would be to inflict on his own child a most terrible, an irreparable calamity; to let him go free, would be to stultify himself and make his government despised. He therefore determined to bear part of the punishment himself, rather than totally deprive his child of sight, and each endured the extinction of an eye. It cannot be wondered at that such an arrangement produced a deeper conviction of the majesty and inviolability of law, and more fully answered the end of punishment, than even the exact execution of the original sentence could have done. Still, although an atonement was thus made, you will perceive that it was incomplete; the punishment was indeed diminished, but not remitted; justice was upheld, law was honoured, but the yearnings of parental affection were only partially satisfied. If the Eternal God should ever determine on a provision for reconciling the claims of the Father and the Judge, that provision, we may be certain beforehand, will be perfect. The law will be fully illustrated and magnified; the offender, entirely delivered from the grasp of the sentence, will be restored to all the blessings and honours of a child; the maintenance of absolute rectitude will be joined with free and unreserved forgiveness; the Father and the Judge alike recognised and satisfied. Now this is precisely what *has* been done. God has looked with righteousness, and yet in pity, on sinful and erring man, and has said, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." That ransom was nothing less than the obedience and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, who was God manifest in the flesh, came down from the Father as our Substitute and Surety. "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree; though he knew no sin, he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He "redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The consummate excellence of that law was manifested by his life, which was one unvarying career of obedience to its commands. The inflexible decision of that law was proved, when it was seen that, rather than its honour should be tarnished, Jesus, the Son of God, would suffer in the sinner's room. The real greatness and blessedness of subjecting our own will to the Divine, was illustrated in his sublime self-sacrifice; and a way was opened whereby, in strictest harmony with the highest justice, the repentant sinner can obtain mercy, and the self-condemned and trembling prodigal can find a home in his Father's house. The legal difficulties—the difficulties connected with the violation of public, universal law—are now removed; a channel is provided through which grace and blessing can flow to the penitent, and God is both just and the Justifier of those who believe in Jesus. All that a Father's overflowing heart sees needful for the recovery of his foolish and erring children, He can now bestow without dishonour and without stint; and therefore, by the lips of his own Son, He has pronounced that all-comprehending promise: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask?" Directly the sinner wakes up to a sense of his guilt and danger, and seeks forgiveness through Jesus Christ, he receives both the remission of his sentence and the heart of a child. The love which has made so costly a provision for his restoration is the surest guarantee that he shall not apply in vain. However guilty,

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however timid, he need not fear; the grace that saves is infinite; "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Still it is, perhaps, not to be wondered at that some, who get a very distinct and profound view of their own sin, should tremble and hesitate. "Is it possible," they are ready to ask, "that upon one so unworthy as I am, one who has so long and so grievously offended, the Eternal God can ever look with favour? Is it possible that He will ever welcome me as his child?" Now, the parable from which I have taken my text is well adapted to dispel such fears, and most important it is that they should be dispelled, for if a man fancies that he is in a hopeless condition, he endeavours, in the best way he can, to reconcile himself to it, and drops all effort to get free. If a man looks upon God with terror, as a being whose anger he deserves and must endure, he can regard Him with no filial love. The willingness of God, therefore, to receive and pardon the penitent is a truth which must be believed and felt, if the sinner is to be incited to any feelings of trust and tenderness, or to any endeavours after pardon and deliverance. Let us look, then, at the encouragement which is given to every awakened sinner by this parable, to the meaning of which my text is the key. Like the two preceding parables of the lost sheep and the lost piece of money, it was no doubt intended to account for the condescension which our Lord displayed to the lowest and basest of the populace—the publicans and sinners whom the Pharisees despised. The woman who has merely lost a coin sweeps every corner till she finds it, for the simple reason that we none of us like to lose the smallest trifle. The shepherd who has lost one of his sheep tracks it through brake and moors, and brings it on his shoulders rejoicing, because he takes an interest in every one of his flock. But who can fully describe the feelings of a father, when his erring and reckless child, long lost to his family, the shame and dishonour of his house, comes back with broken heart and obedient spirit—the joy with which he clasps him to his bosom, and, refusing to hear of the past, is only concerned to celebrate his return? "And shall not I," suggests the Saviour, "who am the good shepherd, seek these poor lost sheep? Shall not I, who possess a heart warmer than the tenderest father's, welcome my poor prodigal, who displays the returning love of a child? and, if you self-righteous Pharisees, in your pride and exclusiveness, stand aloof, shall not I rejoice over a son who was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found?" Let none then be discouraged. The Saviour is ready to receive you. The Eternal Father is waiting to be gracious. And if any still shrink back with alarm, still fear lest they should be rejected, let them come and look a little more narrowly into this exquisite parable.

I. Is it the recollection of the *descent*, which you voluntarily made, that disturbs you, the downward course, which you so wilfully took? Then think of the younger son in our narrative. He had a wise and indulgent father, a rich and happy home. But after a while, he began to lose that perfect sympathy with his father which had once prevailed; difference of view produced a real, though scarcely perceptible, diminution of affection. As a natural consequence, he fretted under the restraints of the family, felt the risings of independence, and longed to be free. For all of us must have noticed that the fresh warm love of a child's heart, the deep, reverent concern to do his father's pleasure, is like a silken cord which, without conscious restraint, binds him to home and its purity, is like the strong, health-giving breeze which makes his task a pleasure. But when this filial love is weakened, as if the cord were snapped, and the air become sultry and stagnant, the attraction of home affections and virtues gradually ceases to hold him, and a moral taint corrupts his soul. So this young man, obtaining the portion of goods intended for him, at last set out on a long journey into a far country, and separated himself entirely from his father's counsel and influence. Time wore on, and he probably forgot his home altogether. He sent no messages to indicate his love, and received no advice to restrain him from evil. The father who had so tenderly nurtured him, so generously endowed him, was treated with absolute neglect, and communications between them were completely dropped. And now, finding himself where there was nothing to check his selfishness, nothing to revive that domestic love which is the strongest natural preservative from vice, he gave the reins to his passions and sinned without reserve. So completely was he lost to all sense of honour or shame, that he actually used the goods which his father had given him to obtain criminal indulgences which he must have known that his father abhorred. O! I have heard of a young man who was trained in a pious home, but, in this great city, he fell into evil company and resorted to haunts of guilty pleasure. But the little purse of money which his mother sent up from time to time he always reserved for higher purposes, and

sacredly refrained from expending on his sins one penny of that sum which bore the impress of a mother's purity and a mother's love. But this graceless son employed the very gold which had just come from the hands of his father in the practice of vice, and made his kind and pious parent unwittingly the minister of his sin. At length he discovers, what all must sooner or later discover, that "the way of transgressors is hard." Famine arises, his substance is gone, he is reduced to beggary and want. Does he now remember his sins? Does he now think of the father whose heart he so sorely wounded, and whose house he so offensively left? No. He will take another step lower still. He had been a stranger in that distant land hitherto; he will now, if possible, become naturalized, and so he joins himself to a citizen of the country, who sends him into the fields to feed swine. He who could not endure the gentle restraint of a well-ordered home is now obliged to bear the shameful bondage of a swineherd. But, spite of this humiliation, he is still in want. The husks of the swine do not fill his belly or satisfy his hunger,—for man cannot be content with the food of swine,—and no one offers him ought beside. There he is at last utterly undone. He has gradually reached the lowest point of degradation and misery; to every eye his case appears hopeless. He has parted with his birth-right, happy and confidential intercourse with his father, has lost his purity, has squandered his substance, is utterly without the means of gratifying any wish, and sits down in filth and rags, to contend with the swine for the husks which they eat.

Does any one among you say,—"*That*, spiritually, is *my* position; that, in other words, is the very course that I have run?" Alas! it is by no means impossible, for it is the history of thousands. You can, perhaps, remember the time when you thought of God with reverence and love. Gentle hands led you to the mercy-seat, and taught you to say, "Our Father." But gradually feelings of estrangement arose. The way in which your heavenly Father bade you walk was not quite in accordance with your wishes; you entertained hard thoughts of God; and when you knelt in prayer at night you knew that you did not love Him as you once had done. No one save yourself, perhaps, at first noticed the change, as no one but the patient detects that slight shortness of breath which is yet the precursor of consumption and death. But that change was one of which, if you had then seen the termination, it would have caused your heart to quake. As long as we "acknowledge God in all our ways," and make "Him first and last and midst," as long as our hearts beat truly to Him, and, like young Samuel, we can promptly say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," so long do we preserve at once our manhood and our sonship untouched; but directly his presence becomes a burden, and we long to cast off the restraint of his law, that moment the heart of a child begins to go from us, and the loftiest and most conservative element in our humanity sinks and declines. It was so with you. Impatient of his control, wishing to follow out "the devices and desires" of your mind, you soon wandered from him altogether. You put aside your Bible on the shelf where it has slumbered ever since. You gave up prayer, and years have fled since last you bowed your knee in supplication. You deserted the assembly of Sabbath worshippers, or, if present, were totally ignorant of all that was passing. At last God was not in all your thoughts; though He gave you your substance, and though his bounties ought to have reminded you every moment of your obligation, you forgot Him altogether, and lived *far*, far from Him in wicked works. Scarce any mark remained of that relationship which was once so hallowed—scarce any recollection of those happy days when the name of father was a fountain of joy. Nor was this the worst. When you forsook your father, you did not go portionless. You wished to take his gifts into your own hands, and use them without his interference, and he let you,—in judgment and displeasure,—he let you. As he retains none and advises none against their will, he said to you virtually, "Go take what thou wishest or thinkest to belong to thee; have all under thy own power and use it as thou deemest fit. Assume the guidance of thy reason, thine affections, thy passions, thy tastes, acquired knowledge, and worldly goods, and find out by experience what it is to have thine own way and trust thine own heart." And those gifts you took, gifts which came direct from the hands of the Holy One, and how did you use them? You used them to undermine his authority, to break his commands, to sin against all He holds sacred, and to grieve his Holy Spirit. His very gifts, the powers of mind and bounties of providence with which his hands endowed you, you employed to aid you in a course which you knew his soul abhorred. It may be that that course was not openly flagrant; you were simply lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God. Or, it may, be that you gave yourself up to habits of impurity and intemperance, of profanity and dissipation. At any rate, you perverted the faculties and affections of your mind and the rich supplies

of God's bounty, and sank low in the gulph of sin. As long as outward circumstances continued prosperous, and you were urged forward by a favourable gale, you exulted in your independence and laughed away care; but when the clouds gathered darkness and a storm of sorrow broke on your head, then you were troubled. For your new situation you were utterly unprepared. You had nothing to comfort you. You were absolutely in want. But instead of turning your feet homeward, you only allied yourself more firmly to an ungodly world, and sought in its provisions relief from misery and despair. Ordinary pleasures became insipid, new and lower ones were resorted to, just as when the pampered, sickly appetite fails, more highly seasoned meats are prepared. You sought satisfaction in that which was merely outward and material, and, as this can never meet the cravings of the soul, you were still conscious of want. You strove to feed your mind on speculations which treated religion as fiction and folly, and, since the religious element is that which chiefly distinguishes man from the brute creation, you seemed resolved to live on the very husks which the swine did eat. And now you were the picture of wretchedness and degradation. Your Father forsaken, your nature polluted, your heart dissatisfied and desolate, your conscience restless, your hope gone. "Yes," you reply, "you have sketched me to the life, and my hope is gone." But why? your history is indeed a shameful one, but why despair? Has not your course been, step by step, the very counterpart of the prodigal, and was not he received? Nay, is not that very prodigal a description of your own self, drawn by the hand of infinite love, that, when every thing within and around you should speak only of despair, you might hear one voice which you could not distrust, saying to your trembling spirit, "be of good cheer, your sins are all forgiven." Then left up your heads, ye desponding ones. Be not afraid, only believe. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall become, through the cleansing power of Christ's grace, white as snow, though red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

II. But perhaps, some of you are inclined to say, "My course has been a very ungrateful and unholy one, I know; I have been the very chief of sinners; but even this does not so much alarm me as the fact that I have become religiously a complete wreck; my soul is a dark blank: can I ever be again what I once was, ever hope to occupy the meanest place among those who serve the Lord?" Look again at the prodigal; his history may give you brighter thoughts. If ever there was a heart in which every holy affection appeared to be totally dried up, it was his. If ever there was a condition from which escape and restoration seemed impossible, it was his. But after all, his case was not desperate; neither is yours. The love of Christ, the power of the Spirit are all-sufficient.

1. Just observe the way in which right feeling sprung up again in his heart. He was in deep distress. Every thing that he had tried, to yield him comfort, failed. Looking forward and around him in sheer misery, and finding nothing that gave him rest, he turned his thoughts backward to the days of his youth; memory revisited the home of plenty and peace, felt the warm touch of a father's hand, and the kind greetings of a father's voice. Lost in the visions of by-gone happiness, he found old feelings returning. The flood-gates which had long been closed were once more opened, and, with tears of shame and wonder, he exclaimed, "How many hired servants of my *father's* have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" No sooner did he pronounce the name of father again, and allow his thoughts to dwell fixedly on that father's love, than "he comes to himself;" from that dried-up heart affection gushed forth, and with it sorrow and contrition, and his former self, which seemed lost and buried beneath passion, baseness, and guilt, came back, and he was a child again. And, dear friends, will not the same means produce the same results in you? Assuredly they will. If, turning away in very weariness from those worldly pleasures or sinful excesses, in which you have sought satisfaction in vain, you think of God, and remember those happier days when you were permitted to call him Father, that name will touch a chord which has long ceased to vibrate, and awaken a clear response in your dumb and dormant soul. As you muse on those proofs of a Father's considerate care, which you behold in the blessings which hourly fall to your lot, or on those words of parental love and promise which He has addressed to you, or on that rich provision of his grace which He has made for you in the Gospel, some answering child-like feelings will spring up in your heart, and, taught by the Divine Spirit Himself, you will cry, "Father! Father!" Oh! think of God—of God in Christ, your Creator, your Benefactor, your Preserver, your Redeemer, your Father,—and even your death-stricken soul may live again; yes, some good thing may spring up in the arid soil of your hard heart.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

2. Then further, notice that the right judgment which the prodigal formed of his condition and his deserts was a means of his recovery. "How many hired servants of my father's," said he, "have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" The contrast between what he was and what he would have been had he never wandered, he now distinctly saw; and when he recollected that he brought himself into this perishing state by his own wilfulness, no wonder that, with deep feeling, he exclaimed, "I am not worthy to be called thy son!" He could not endure his loathsome sinfulness or his abject wretchedness, and yet he saw that he could not think of himself too meanly. It was the sense of misery which made him conclude that he must do something; it was the conviction of his worthlessness which made him ready to do or be any thing; and it was this accurate perception of the whole of his pitiable case which led him to do the right thing. And, dear friends, the very perception which you have of the awfulness of your own condition, of your utter want of goodness and merit, does it not show that you begin to see the truth? Do not your convictions correspond with the reality? Does not this feeling of utter emptiness and want make you long for deliverance? Is it not that thirsting of the soul after righteousness, which ever precedes being filled? Does not your burning sense of unworthiness make you ready to fall in with methods of escape which once you would have spurned? Do you not feel, "Any conditions would be welcome, if only I might find mercy; if I am saved at all, it must be by grace alone?" Now, this judgment is according to truth; it is the conclusion which you must arrive at, whenever the light is thrown in upon your soul. Till you see yourselves as you are, you can never become anything better; but directly you behold your guilt and shame, you are prepared to rise, and hopelessness itself becomes the pledge of hope.

3. And then, again, remark, that instead of dwelling on his wretched condition until he was paralysed with shame and fear, he hastened to resolve and to act. "If," said he, "I continue here, I can only perish; if I delay, resolution may perhaps fail. 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.'" Not only was sensibility restored and truth discovered, but his will began to act, and he set out to return. Penitent for the past, anxious to be all that he ought to be in the future, love and sorrow filling his soul, he took the first step towards his home. And, dear friends, does not this teach you that your chief danger now lies in pausing; hesitating, when you ought to decide? It is well for you to have a clear, soul-humbling view of your lost state; but if you only think of that, you will sit down in anguish and bewilderment, palsied and irresolute, and will never make an effort to escape. No; with penitence in your heart, and confession on your lip, and decision in your glance, listen to that inspired warning, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart;" and, without one moment's pause, resolve, "I will arise, and will go unto my Father." Again, the prodigal's story resembles your own, and says to you, "Though your soul appears to you a blank and a wreck, still fear not."

III. But possibly some others of you may say, "We do now see that, wilful and wicked as was our departure from God, depraved and wretched as is the condition into which we have sunk, we need not despair; but still we fear that, when we have set out, our

hearts will misgive us, and as we approach the seat of the Holy One, we shall start back with shame and dread. The thought will rush across the mind, How can we meet his face? How dare we hope for forgiveness and acceptance?" Once more let us look at the prodigal. He has set out on his journey; he has travelled many weary miles; he now begins to recognize old and familiar spots; his heart sinks and rises as he thinks that another hour or two may bring him within sight of home. In that same direction his father is walking, and very far off, just on the verge of the horizon, he sees a forlorn and ragged figure toiling slowly on his way. A servant of the household would never have guessed who it was, but a parent's eye could not be mistaken. In that squalid, poverty-stricken stranger he detects his own son, and, lest his courage should fail, he hastens to meet him, and, before the penitent can confess his sin or urge his humble petition, he falls on his neck and kisses him. O, wondrous illustration of the Great Father's love and pity to his returning children! He sees, beneath the reckless, godless, unpromising exterior, the first feeling of shame and sorrow, the first wish to be better; He hears the first whisper, inaudible and unsuspected by any but Himself, "I will arise and go to my father," and lest that feeble spark should be quenched, or the wish be extinguished in despair, He goes forth to meet him in his promises and his grace, and says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." O! is not this enough to scatter the fears of the most timid, and, while it encourages your heart, to fill it with fervent, lasting love?

But this is not all. The son, still more smitten with shame and penitence by his father's tenderness and his father's welcome, sobbed out the impassioned acknowledgment, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son;" but the father, absorbed in the joy of his return, answered by acts rather than words, and commanded his servants to put on him the best robe, to put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, to kill the fatted calf, and prepare a feast, at which all might exult on the wanderer's return. He is reinstated in his old position, he lives again in his father's love, honours are heaped upon him, and the joyous refrain is ever and anon repeated, "This, my son, was dead and is alive again: he was lost and is found." And this exquisite touch, so true to nature, is intended to encourage all those shrinking, trembling ones that are disposed to lose heart, when they think of drawing near to God. Not only will He not scorn or reproach you, not only will He manifest no hesitation to receive you, but "before you call he will answer, and while you are yet speaking he will hear." Repel you! reprove you! He, who made such a sacrifice to save you? He will load you with honour, He will lavish on you his gifts. He will place you not among the servants, but the children; He will cleanse you by the grace of his Spirit, and adorn you with the robe of his righteousness; He will give you the pledge of indissoluble union and everlasting love; He will refresh you by the ordinances of his house, the fellowship of his saints, and the promises of his Word; He will invite all holy beings to exult in your recovery and "rejoice over you with singing;" and at last He will bring you to that blest home where you shall for ever behold his presence and share in the fulness of his joy! Again we say, to those who wish to love God, wish to live the lives and wear the character of children, "Fear not, he will abundantly pardon."

IV. And here we might close: and yet it is possible that there are a few who may

be disheartened, not so much by the thought of God, as by the cold, reproachful, bitter tone in which some professedly religious men refer to the depraved and sunken, and to any expression of hope that they may be reclaimed and elevated. Such men, you believe, look on you with a little pity and with much contempt. Proud of their own fancied righteousness, they regard you as the offscouring of all things, they never darken your doors, or speak one kind helpful word to you, but only try to forget you, because the remembrance of you disturbs their quiet. Well, my brethren, I fancy that these men, if they ever existed, are daily getting fewer; that Christians are becoming more and more anxious to bless the irreligious and wretched, both in body and in soul; and that some of those whom you suspect of scorn and cold-heartedness are held back rather by the fear that you would resent their interference, than by unconcern about your condition. But, even if to any extent you are right, remember that the Pharisees, who thought themselves emphatically the religious men of their day, shrunk with a still more pious horror from the very touch of the publicans and sinners, whose case is set forth by the prodigal. But what did the prodigal do? If he had asked counsel of the lordly Pharisee, his elder brother, he would probably have been driven to despair, but, asking the help of no one, he went straight to his father, and, folded in his arms of love, forgot all about the sneers and surprise with which his welcome would be greeted. And when his Pharisaic brother began to sulk and to growl, that so much joy and feasting should be wasted on such a worthless wretch, and jealously intimated that years of obedience on his part had been rewarded by no such honour, did the father give up the wanderer, or say to the complainer, "You are right?" O, no! he reproved him for his sullen exclusiveness; showed the unreasonableness of his angry remonstrance, and cried, "It is *meet* that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." If then, either with or without reason, you fear coldness and incredulity from those who ought to take you by the hand, go direct to the Saviour, make your confession to *Him* rest in *His* atonement, confide in *His* love, and let no proud Pharisee cheat you of the blessedness of being his son. Once at home again, your heart true and faithful, your life consistent and pure, you will receive a brother's welcome from many from whom you expected a sneer. Loving greetings and earnest prayers will be poured on your head, and if any should hold aloof and murmur their doubts and apprehensions, you will lose all sense of the passing annoyance in the warm smile of Him who knows your heart, and who says to each doubter, "This my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found." May the Holy Spirit of God lead you to the Saviour, help you to trust in Him alone, and grant you grace to live and die as his sons. Amen.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE TWO TALENTS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 31, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliverest unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—Matthew xxv. 22. 23.

"EVERY good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." All that men have they must trace to the Great Fountain, the giver of all good. Hast thou talents? They were given thee by the God of talents. Hast thou time? hast thou wealth, influence, power? Hast thou powers of tongue? Hast thou powers of thought? Art thou poet, statesman, or philosopher? Whatever be thy position and whatever be thy gifts, remember that they are not thine, but they are lent thee from on high. No man hath anything of his own, except his sins. We are but tenants at will. God hath put us into his estates, and he hath said, "Occupy till I come." Though our vineyards bear never so much fruit, yet the vineyard belongs to the King, and though we are to take the hundred for our hire, yet King Solomon must have his thousand. All the honour of our ability and the use of it must be unto God, because he is the Giver. The parable tells us this very pointedly; for it makes every person acknowledge that his talents come from the Lord. Even the man who digged in the earth and hid his Lord's money, did not deny that his talent belonged to his Master; for though his reply, "Lo, there thou hast that is thine," was exceedingly impertinent, yet it was not a denial of this fact. So that even this man was ahead of those who deny their obligations to God, who superciliously toss their heads at the very mention of obedience to their Creator, and spend their time and their powers rather in rebellion against him than in his service. Oh, that we were all wise to believe and to act upon this most evident of all truths, that everything we have, we have received from the Most High.

Now, there are some men in the world who have but few talents. Our parable says, "One had five, and another two." To them I shall address myself this morning; and I pray that the few pointed things I may say, may be blessed of God to their edification or rebuke. First, I shall notice the *fact that there are many persons who have but few talents*, and I will try to account for God's dispensing but few to them. Secondly, I shall remind them that *even for these few talents they must be brought to account*. And thirdly, I shall conclude, by making the comforting observation, that *if our few talents be rightly used, neither our own conscience nor our Master's judgment shall condemn us for not having more*.

I. First, then, GOD HAS MADE SOME MEN WITH FEW TALENTS. You very often hear men speak of one another as if God had made no mental differences at all. One man finds himself successful, and he supposes that if everyone else could have been as industrious and as persevering as himself, everyone must necessarily have been as successful. You will often hear remarks against ministers who are godly and earnest men, but who do not happen to have much attracting power, and they are called drones and lazy persons, because they cannot make much of a stir in the

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world, whereas the reason may be, that they have but little talent, and are making the best use of what they have, and therefore ought not to be rebuked for the littleness of what they are able to accomplish. It is a fact, which every man must see, that even in our birth there is a difference. All children are not alike precocious, and all men certainly are not alike capable of learning or of teaching. God hath made eminent and marvellous differences. We are not to suppose that all the difference between a Milton and a man who lives and dies without being able to read, has been caused by education. There was doubtless a difference originally, and though education will do much, it cannot do everything. Fertile ground, when well-tilled, will necessarily bring forth more than the best tilled estate, the soil of which is hard and sterile. God has made great and decided differences; and we ought, in dealing with our fellow men, to recollect this, lest we should say harsh things of those very men to whom God will afterwards say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

But why is it that God has not given to all men like talents? My first answer shall be, because God is a Sovereign, and of all attributes, next to his love, God is the most fond of displaying his sovereignty. The Lord God will have men know that he has a right to do what he wills with his own. Hence it is, that in salvation he gives it to some and not to others; and his only reply to any accusation of injustice is, "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" The worm is not to murmur because God did not make it an angel, and the fish that swims the sea must not complain because it hath not wings to fly into the highest heavens. God had a right to make his creatures just what he pleased, and though men may dispute his right, he will hold and keep it inviolate against all comers. That he may hedge his right about and make vain man acknowledge it, in all his gifts he continually reminds us of his sovereignty. "I will give to this man," he says, "a mind so acute that he shall pry into all secrets; I will make another so obtuse that none but the plainest elements of knowledge shall ever be attainable by him. I will give to one man such a wealth of imagination, that he shall pile mountain upon mountain of imagery, till his language seems to reach to celestial majesty; I will give to another man a soul so dull, that he shall never be able to originate a poetic thought." Why this, O God? The answer comes back, "Shall I not do what I will with mine own?" "So, then, the children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, it was written, the elder shall serve the younger." And so it is written concerning men, that one of them shall be greater than another; one shall bow his neck, and the other put his foot upon it, for the Lord hath a right to dispose of places and of gifts, of talents and wealth, just as seemeth good in his sight.

Now, most men quarrel with this. But mark, the thing that you complain of in God, is the very thing that you love in yourselves. Every man likes to feel that he has a right to do with his own as he pleases. We all like to be little sovereigns. You will give your money freely and liberally to the poor; but if any man should impertinently urge that he had a claim upon your charity, would you give unto him? Certainly not; and who shall impeach the greatness of your generosity in so doing? It is even as that parable, that we have in one of the Evangelists, where, after the men had toiled, some of them twelve hours, some of them six, and some of them but one, the Lord gave every man a penny. Oh! I would meekly bow my head, and say, "My Lord, hast thou given me one talent? then I bless thee for it, and I pray thee bestow upon me grace to use it rightly. Hast thou given to my brother ten talents? I thank thee for the greatness of thy kindness towards him; but I neither envy him, nor complain of thee." Oh! for a spirit that bows always before the sovereignty of God.

Again: God gives to one five, and to another two talents, because the Creator is a lover of variety. It was said that order is heaven's first law; surely variety is the second; for in all God's works, there is the most beautiful diversity. Look ye towards the heavens at night: all the stars shine not with the same brilliance, nor are they placed in straight lines, like the lamps of our streets. Then turn your eyes below: see in the vegetable world, how many great distinctions there are, ranging from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, or the moss that is smaller still. See how from the huge mammoth tree, that seems as if beneath its branches it might shade an army, down to the tiny lichen, God hath made everything beautiful, but everything full of variety. Look on any one tree, if you please: see how

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every leaf differs from its fellow—how even the little tiny buds that are at this hour bursting at the scent of the approaching perfume of spring, differ from each other—not two of them alike. Look again, upon the animated world: God hath not made every creature like unto another. How wide the range—from the colossal elephant, to the coney that burrows in the rock—from the whale that makes the deep hoary with its lashings, to the tiny minnow that skims the brook; God hath made all things different, and we see variety everywhere. I doubt not it is the same, even in heaven, for there there are “thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers”—different ranks of angels, perhaps, rising tier upon tier. “One star different from another star in glory.” And why should not the same rule stand good in manhood? Doth God cast us all in the same mould? It seems not so; for he hath not made our faces alike; no two countenances can be said to be exactly the same, for if there be some likeness, yet is there a manifest diversity. Should minds, then, be alike? Should souls all be cast in the same fashion? Should God’s creation dwindle down into a great manufactory, in which everything is melted in the same fire and poured into the same mould? No, for variety’s sake, he will have one man a renowned David, and another David’s unknown armour bearer; he will have one man a Jeremy, who shall prophecy, and another a Baruch, who shall only read the prophecy; one shall be rich as Dives, another poor as Lazarus; one shall speak with a voice loud as thunder, another shall be dumb; one shall be mighty in word and doctrine, another shall be feeble in speech and slow in words. God will have variety, and the day will come when, looking down upon the world we shall see the beauty of its history to be mightily indebted to the variety of the characters that entered into it.

But a little further. God hath a deeper reason than this. God gives to some men but few talents, because he has many small spheres, and he would have these filled. There is a great ocean, and it needs inhabitants. O Lord, thou hast made Leviathan to swim therein. There is a secret grotto, a hidden cavern, far away in the depths of the sea; its entrance is but small; if there were nought but a Leviathan, it must remain untenanted for ever: a little fish is made, and that small place becomes an ocean unto it. There are a thousand sprays and twigs upon the trees of the forest; were an eagle, how would the forests be made glad with song, and how could each twig bear its songster? But because God would have each twig have its own music, he has made the little songster to sit upon it. Each sphere must have the creature to occupy it adapted to the size of the sphere. God always acts economically. Does he intend a man to be the pastor of some small parish with four or five hundred inhabitants? Of what use is it giving to that man the abilities of an apostle? Does he intend a woman to be a humble teacher of her own children at home, a quiet trainer of her own family? Would it not even disturb her and injure her if God should make her a poetess, and give her gifts that might electrify a nation? The littleness of her talents will to a degree fit her for the littleness of her sphere. There is some youth who is quite capable of assisting in a Ragged School: perhaps if he had a higher genius he might disdain the work, and so the Ragged School would be without its excellent teacher. There are little spheres, and God will have little men to occupy them. There are posts of important duty, and men shall be found with nerve and muscle fitted for the labour. He has made a statue for every niche, and a picture for every portion of the gallery; none shall be left vacant; but since some niches are small, so shall be the statuettes that occupy them. To some he gives two talents, because two are enough, and five would be too many.

Once more: God gives to men two talents, because in them very often he displays the greatness of his grace in saving souls. You have heard of a minister who was deeply read in sacred lore; his wisdom was profound, and his speech graceful. Under his preaching many were converted. Have you never heard it not quite said, but almost hinted, that much of his success was traceable to his learning and to his graceful oratory? But, on the other hand, you have met with a man, rough in his dialect, uncouth in his manners, evidently without any great literary attainments; nevertheless, God has given that man the one talent of an earnest heart; he speaks like a son of thunder; with rough, stern language, he denounces sin and proclaims the gospel; under him hundreds are converted. The world sneers at him. “I can see no reason for all this,” says the scholar; “it is all rubbish—cant; the man knows nothing.” The critic takes up his pen, nips it afresh, dips it in the bitterest ink he can find, and writes a most delightful history of the man, in which

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he goes so far as to say, not that he sees horns on his head, but almost everything but that. He is everything that is bad, and nothing that is good. He utterly denounces him. He is foolish, he is vain, he is base, he is proud, he is illiterate, he is vulgar. There was no word in the English language that was bad enough for him, but one must be coined. And now what says the church? What says the man himself? "Even so, O Lord; now must the glory be unto thee for ever, inasmuch as thou hast chosen the base things of this world, and the things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are." So it seemeth that out of the little God sometimes winneth more glory than he doth out of the great; and I doubt not that he has made some of you with little power to do good, with little influence, and with a narrow sphere, that he may, in the last great day, manifest to angels how much he can do in a little space. You know, dear friends, there are two things that always will attract our attention. One is skill embodied in a stupendous mass. We see the huge ship, the Leviathan, and we wonder that man could have made it; at another time we see an elegant piece of workmanship that will stand upon less than a square inch, and we say, "Well, I can understand how men can make a great ship, but I cannot comprehend how an artist could have the patience and the skill to make so minute a thing as this." And ah! my friends, it seems to me that God is not a greater God to our apprehension, when we see the boundless fields of ether and the unnumbered orbs swimming therein, than when we see a humble cottager, and behold God's perfect work carried out in her soul, and God's highest glory wrought from her little talent. Surely if in the little, man can honour himself as well as in the great, the Infinite, and the Eternal, can most of all glorify himself when he stoopeth to the littleness of mankind.

II. Our second proposition was, that even A FEW TALENTS MUST BE ACCOUNTED FOR. We are very apt when we think of the day of judgment, to imagine that certain characters will undergo a more trying process than others. I know I have often involuntarily said, when reading the history of Napoleon, "Here is a man of tremendous ability, the world's master; a dozen centuries might be required to produce such another man; but here is a man who prostitutes all his ability to ambition, carries his armies like a destroying deluge across every country, widows wives, and renders children fatherless, not by hundreds but by thousands, if not by millions. What must be his solemn account when he stands before the throne of God? Shall not the witnesses rise up from the fields of Spain, of Russia, of Italy, of Egypt, of Palestine, and accuse the man who, to gratify his own bold ambition, led them to death?" But will you please to remember that though Napoleon must be a prisoner at the bar, each of us must stand there also? And though our position is not very high, and we have not stood upon the pinnacle of fame, yet we have stood quite high enough to be borne under the observation of the Most High, and we have had just ability enough and power enough to have done mischief in the world, and to be accountable for it. "Oh!" said one, "I thought that surely in the day of judgment he would pass me by; I have been no Tom Paine; I have not been a leader amongst low and vulgar infidels; I have been no murderer; I have not been a prince among sinners; I have not been a disturber of the public peace; what few sins I have committed have taken place quietly; nobody has heard of them; I don't think my bad example has gone far; perhaps my children have not been much blessed by my behaviour, but, nevertheless, mine has been a very small quantum of mischief, too small to have poisoned any one beside myself. I have been, on the whole, so tolerably moral, that though I cannot say I have served God, yet my defalcations from the path of duty have been slight indeed!" Ah! truly friends! you may think yourselves never so little, but your making yourselves insignificant will not excuse you. You have had but little entrusted to you! Then the less trouble for you to make use of your talents. The man who has many talents requires much hard labour to use them all. He might make the excuse that he found five talents too many to put out in the market at once; you have only one; anybody can lend out his one talent to interest—it will cost you but little trouble to supply that; and inasmuch as you live, and inasmuch as you die, without having improved the one talent, your guilt will be exceedingly increased by the very fact that your talent was but little, and, consequently, the trouble of using it would have been but little too. If you had but little, God required but little of you; why, then, did you not render that? If any man holds a house at a rental of a pound a year, let it be never so small a house for the money, if he brings not his rent there is not one half the excuse for him that there would be if his rent had been a hundred pounds, and he had

failed to bring it. You shall be the more inexcusable on account of the little that was required of you. Let me, then, address you, and remind you that you must be brought to account.

Remember, my hearer, that in the day of judgment thy account must be personal; God will not ask you what your church did—he will ask you what you did yourself. Now there is a Sunday school. If God should try all members of the church in a body, they would each of them say, O Lord, as a body we had an excellent Sunday school, and had many teachers, and so they would excuse themselves. But no; one by one, all professors must come before him. "What did you do for the Sabbath school? I gave you a gift for teaching children—what did you do?" "O Lord, there was a Sabbath school." That has nothing to do with it? What did you do? You are not to account now for the company with which you were united, but for yourself as an individual. "O," says one, "there were a number of poor ministers; I was at the Surrey Hall, and so much was done for them." No; what did you do? You must be held personally responsible for your own wealth, for your own ability. "Well," says one, "I am happy to say there is a great deal more preaching now than there used to be; the churches seem to be roused." Yes, sir, and you seem to take part of the credit to yourself. Do you preach more than you used to? You are a minister; do you make any greater efforts? Remember, it is not what your brethren are doing, but it is what you do that you will be called to account for at the bar of God; and each one of you will be asked this question, "What hast thou done with thy talent?" All your connection with churches will avail you nothing; it is your personal doings—your personal service towards God that is demanded of you as an evidence of saving grace. And if others are idle—if others pay not God his due—so much the more reason why you should have been more exceedingly diligent in doing so yourself.

Recollect, again, that your account will have to be particular. God will go into all the items of it. At the day of judgment you will not have to cast up a hurried account in the gross, but every item shall be read. Can you prove that? Yes. "For every idle word that man shall speak, he shall be brought unto account at the day of judgment." Now, it is in the items that men go astray. "Well," says one, "If I look at my life in the bulk, I am not very much ashamed, but it is those items, those little items—they are the troublesome part of the account, that one does not care to meddle with." Do you know that all yesterday was made up of littles? And the things of to-day are all little, and what you do to-morrow will all be little things. Just as the tiny shells make up the chalk hills, and the chalk hills together make up the range, so the trifling actions make up the whole account, and each of these must be pulled asunder separately. You had an hour to spare the other day—what did you do? You had a voice—how did you use it? You had a pen—you could use that—how did you employ it? Each particular shall be brought out, and there shall be demanded an account for each one. Oh, that you were wise, that ye did not stir this matter, but would take every note in the music of your behaviour, and seek to make each note in harmony with its fellow, lest, after all, the psalm of your life may prove to be a hideous discord. Oh, that ye who are without God would remember that your life is assuredly such, that the trial of the last great day must end in your condemnation.

Again, that account will be very exact, and there will be no getting off without those little things. "Oh! they were a few peccadilloes and very small matters indeed; I never took stock of them at all." But they will all be taken stock of then. When God comes to look into our hearts at last, he will not only look at the great but at the little; everything will be seen into, the pence sins as well as the pound iniquities—all must be brought against us, and an exact account given.

Again, remember, in the last place, upon this point, that the account will be very impartial at the day of judgment, when all will be tried without any reference to their station. The prince will be summoned to give an account of his talents, and side by side must stand his courtier and his slave. The mightiest emperor must stand at God's bar, as well as the meanest cottager. All must appear and be tried according to the deeds they have done in the body. As to our professions, they will avail us nothing. We may have been the proudest hypocrites that ever made the world sick with our pride, but we must be searched and examined, as much as if we had been the vilest sinners. We must take our own trial before God's eternal tribunal, and nothing can bias our judge, or make him give an opinion for or against us, apart from the evidence. Oh, how solemn this will make the

trial, especially if we have no blood of Christ to plead! The great Advocate will get his people an acquittal, through his imputed merits, even though our sin in itself would condemn them. But remember, that without him we shall never be able to stand the fiery ordeal of that last dread assize. "Well," said an old preacher, "when the law was given, Sinai was on a smoke, and it melted like wax; but when the punishment of the law is given, the whole earth will quake and quail. For who shall be able to endure the day of the Lord, the day of God's fierce anger?"

III. The last point is, IF BY DIVINE GRACE—(and it is only by divine grace that this can ever be accomplished)—OUR TWO TALENTS BE RIGHTLY USED, THE FACT THAT WE HAD NOT FIVE, WILL BE NO INJURY TO US.

You say, when such a man dies, who stood in the midst of the church, a triumphant warrior for the truth, the angels will crowd to heaven's gates to see him, for he has been a mighty hero, and done much for his Master. A Calvin or a Luther, with what plaudits shall they be received!—men with talents, who have been faithful to their trust. Yes, but know ye not, that there is many a humble village pastor whose flock scarcely numbers fifty, who toils for them as for his life, who spends hours in praying for their welfare, who uses all the little ability he has in his endeavour to win them to Christ; and do ye imagine that his entry into heaven shall be less triumphant than the entry of such a man as Luther? If so, ye know not how God dealeth with his people. He giveth them rewards, not according to the greatness of the goods with which they were entrusted, but according to their fidelity thereunto, and he that hath been faithful to the least, shall be as much rewarded, as he that hath been faithful in much. I want you briefly to turn to the chapter, to see this. You will note first, that the man with two talents came to his Lord with as great a confidence as the man that had five. "And he said, Lord, thou deliverest unto me two talents; behold, I have gained two talents beside them." I will be bound to say, that while that poor man with the two talents was trading with them, he frequently looked upon his neighbour with the five talents, and said, "Oh, I wish I could do as much as he is doing! See now, he has five talents to put out, and how much interest he has coming every year; Oh, that I could do as much!" And as he went on he often prayed, "O my Lord, give me greater ability, and greater grace to serve thee, for I long to do more." And when he sat down to read his diary, he thought, "Ah, this diary does not tell much. There is no account of my journey through fifty counties; I cannot tell how I have travelled from land to land, as Paul did, to preach the truth. No; I have just had to keep in this parish, and been pretty well starved to death, toiling for this people, and if I have added some ten or a dozen to the church, that has been a very great deal to me. Why, I hear that Mr. So-and-so, was privileged to add two or three hundred in a year; Oh, that I could do that! Surely when I go to heaven, I shall creep in at the door somehow, while he by grace will be enabled to go boldly in, bringing his sheaves with him." Now stop, poor little faith, stop; thy Master will not deal thus with thee. When thou shalt come to die; thou wilt through his grace feel as much confidence in dying with thy two well-used talents, as thy brother with his ten, for thou wilt, when thou comest there, have thy Lord's sweet presence, and thou wilt say, "I am complete in Christ. Christ's righteousness covers me from head to foot, and now in looking back upon my past life, I can say, Blessed be his holy name. It is little that I could do, but I have done as much as I could for him. I know that he will pardon my defects, and forgive my miscarriages, and I shall never look back upon my humble village charge without much joy, that the Lord allowed me to labour there." And, Oh, methinks, that man will have even a richer commendation in his own conscience, than the man who has been more publicly applauded, for he can say to himself, after putting all his trust in Christ, "Well, I am sure I did not do this for fame, for I blushed unseen—I have lost my sweetness on the desert air. No one has ever read my deeds; what I did was between myself and my God, and I can render up my account to him and say, 'Lord, I did it for thee, and not to honour myself.'" Yes, friends, I might tell you now of many a score of earnest evangelists in this our land who are working harder than any one of us, and yet win far less honour. Yes, and I could bring you up many a score of city missionaries whose toil for Christ is beyond all measure of praise, who never get much reward here, nay, rather meet with slights and disrespect. You see the poor man start as soon as he goes from his place of worship to-day. He has got three hours this afternoon to go and spend among the sick, and then you will see him on Monday morning. He has to go from

house to house, often with the door slammed in his face, often exposed to mobs and drunken men, sometimes jered and scoffed at, meeting with persons of all religious persuasions and of no persuasion. He toils on; he has his little evening meeting, and there he gets a little flock together and tries to pray with them, and he gets now and then a man or a woman converted; but he has no honour. He just takes him off to the minister, and he says, "Sir, here is a good man; I think he is impressed; will you baptize him and receive him into your church?" The minister gets all the credit of that, but as for the poor city missionary, there is little or nothing said of him. There is, perhaps, just his name, Mr. Brown, or Mr. Smith, mentioned sometimes in the report, but people do not think much of him, except, perhaps, as an object of charity they have to keep, whereas he is the man that gives them the charity, giving all the sap and blood and marrow of his life for some poor sixty pounds a year, hardly enough to keep his family above want. But he, when he dies, my friend, shall have no less the approval of his conscience than the man who was permitted to stand before the multitudes and raised the nation into excitement on account of religion. He shall come before the master clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and with unblushing face shall say, "I have received two talents; I have gained beside them two talents more."

Furthermore, and to conclude, you will notice there was no difference in his Master's commendation—none in the reward. In both cases, it was "Well done good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Here comes Whitfield, the man that stood before twenty thousand at a time to preach the gospel, who in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America, has testified the truth of God, and who could count his converts by thousands, even under one sermon! Here he comes, the man that endured persecution and scorn, and yet was not moved—the man of whom the world was not worthy, who lived for his fellow men, and died at last for their cause: stand by angels and admire, whilst the Master takes him by the hand and says, "Well done, well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" See how free grace honours the man whom it enabled to do valiantly. Hark! Who is this that comes there? a poor thin-looking creature, that on earth was a consumptive; there was a hectic flush now and then upon her cheek, and she lay three long years upon her bed of sickness. Was she a prince's daughter, for it seems heaven is making much stir about her? No, she was a poor girl that earned her living by her needle, and she worked herself to death!—Stitch, stitch, stitch, from morning to night! and here she comes. She went prematurely to her grave, but she is coming, like a shock of corn fully ripe, into heaven; and her master says, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." She takes her place by the side of Whitfield. Ask what she ever did, and you find out that she used to live in some back garret down some dark alley in London; and there used to be another poor girl come to work with her, and that poor girl, when she first came to work with her, was a gay and volatile creature, and this consumptive child told her about Christ; and they used, when she was well enough, to creep out of an evening to go to chapel or to church together. It was hard at first to get the other one to go, but she used to press her lovingly; and when the girl went wild a little, she never gave her up. She used to say, "O Jane, I wish you loved the Saviour;" and when Jane was not there she used to pray for her, and when she was there she prayed with her; and now and then when she was stitching away, read a page out of the Bible to her, for poor Jane could not read. And with many tears she tried to tell her about the Saviour who loved her and gave himself for her. At last, after many a day of hard persuasion, and many an hour of sad disappointment, and many a night of sleepless tearful prayer, at last she lived to see the girl profess her love to Christ; and she left her and took sick, and there she lay till she was taken to the hospital, where she died. When she was in the hospital she used to have a few tracts, and she used to give them to those who came to see her; she would try, if she could, to get the women to come round, and she would give them a tract. When she first went into the hospital, if she could creep out of bed, she used to get by the side of one who was dying, and the nurse used to let her do it; till at last she got too ill, and then she used to ask a poor woman on the other side of the ward, who was getting better, and was going out, if she would come and read a chapter to her; not that she wanted her to read to

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her on her own account, but for her sake, for she thought it might strike her heart while she was reading it. At last this poor girl died and fell asleep in Jesus; and the poor consumptive needle-woman had said to her, "Well done"—and what more could an archangel have said to her?—"she hath done what she could."

See, then, the Master's commendation, and the last reward will be equal to all men who have used their talents well. Ah! if there be degrees in glory, they will not be distributed according to our talents, but according to our faithfulness in using them. As to whether there are degrees or not, I know not; but this I know, he that doeth his Lord's will, shall have said to him, "Well done good and faithful servant."

And now, friends, this one word only. I have told you that there are many in our denomination who are preaching the gospel continually. I should bring some few of the letters, written by the poor ministers to us to read, but sometimes I think this a violation of delicacy, and I do not like to do it. But when I did that one year, the collection was almost twice as good; so I think I might almost commit a breach of etiquette in order to help them. However, I can solemnly assure you, that if there is poverty anywhere, it is to be found among the ministers in the Baptist churches, and I am sorry to say that one cause of it is the fault of the people themselves; they are so little in the habit of giving, that their ministers are starved. Now, if Christ will say, "Well done," hereafter, to many a humble preacher, do you think he intends the church to starve them while they are here on £30 or £40 a year. Now, brethren, if Christ will say, "Well done," at last, we may anticipate his verdict, and say, "Well done to-day." And can we better say, "well done" than by unmuzzling the ox that treadeth out the corn, and give these poor ministers something out of our own wealth, as God may help us, that their necessities may be supplied? There will be pretty well a score of persons who will be dependant during the next year upon what you give this year; perhaps you will remember that and assist them. One kind gentleman, who usually comes here, says "I could not come to-day, so I forward my pound to be put into the box by the minister." And I trust, if there are any not here to-day who will be here next Sabbath, that they will not forget this collection. It is always very dear to the heart of my church.

The Preacher.

No. XLV.

THE FOLLY OF EXCESSIVE LABOR.

A Sermon,

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY 17, 1858,

BY THE REV. HENRY MELVILL, B. D.,

(Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty, and Canon Residentiary of St Paul's),

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, LONDON.

"If the iron be blunt and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength : but wisdom is profitable to direct."—Ecclesiastes x. 10.

THE first meaning of these words is so obvious as scarcely to require that it be pointed out. A man is engaged in some manual occupation, using an iron instrument, such as an axe or a chisel ; and the nature of his business tends to blunt the tool with which he works, so that after proceeding for some time he is not only fatigued with his labor, but less able to prosecute it from the diminished efficiency of the instrument. Under these circumstances, he might put out more strength, endeavoring to supply by the exertion of greater force the loss resulting from the deterioration of the tool ; but it is easily seen that this method would not answer. He would only be rapidly exhausting his already tasked powers, whilst his continuing to use the blunted instrument would only blunt it still more, so that he must soon be compelled to give up his work in despair. Whereas if he ceased for a little while from his toil, and used the ordinary and known methods of sharpening his tool, all his difficulties might be overcome and he would carry on his trade with both ease and success—so profitable is wisdom to direct. The brute force would be presently exhausted if there were no skill in its management ; but let there be only a due share of prudence, and science, and strength might be so used as to surmount every obstacle. If the iron be blunt and a man refuse or neglect to whet the edge, he must of necessity increase the amount of force which he applies ; and it is not possible with a nature constituted as ours is, that such a system should long be of any avail. But if, as soon as he perceives that the instrument grows blunt, he will bring it to the grinding stone and give it a new edge he may expect through this wise husbandry of his strength to accomplish what he wishes, and greatly to prosper in his labor. Such is evidently we think, the drift of the statement under review, and this having been ascertained and admitted, we proceed to furnish those illustrations of the principle which is brought before us, and to the drawing those inferences which we may judge at once the most pertinent and the most practical.

No. 2,976.

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Now it must often have struck you as a very surprising feature in God's dealings with this earth, that though he has abundantly stored it with all necessities for the purposes and comforts of civilised life, he has left the discovery and employment of such materials dependent upon human industry and ingenuity. We do not know, for example, that he gave any instructions to the first fathers of our race as to agriculture or handicraft: we have rather reason to believe that he left them as he has left their descendants, to learn by experience the uses and properties of different substances, and determine by successive trials the best methods of turning them to account. We are quite aware that many of the most valuable productions of nature, which we even now reckon amongst the necessities of life, are not attainable in any shape except by dint of vast labor, nor available to our wants except when subjected to curious and elaborate processes. The very metal for example, iron, mentioned in our text—to deprive the world of which would be to threaten it with starvation—with what toil is it wrung from the bowels of the earth, and under how much costly and curious operation does it pass ere it can come to the husbandman under the form of a spade or of a plough. God has nowhere instructed man where to find or how to prepare iron; he has only furnished man with faculties for discovery, placed him under circumstances favoring, or rather requiring, the developement of those faculties, and then left him to his own industry and ingenuity, placing a sure reward within reach, if he will make full use of the communicated power.

And how marvellously has discovery gone on from age to age, how have new properties been ascertained, new resources unfolded, new virtues established, so that every century, we may almost say every year, has witnessed some addition to human convenience and comfort; an addition which has resulted from the detection of some fresh power in nature, or from a fresh application of some already known law. You read of Tubal Cain, the seventh in descent from Adam, that he was the instructor of every artificer in brass and iron. The human race was then vastly on the increase, and it had become a matter of great importance to it that there should be such improvements in husbandry as could not be effected without the use of metals; and industry and ingenuity had been so turned on discoveries and inventions whilst the necessity was only beginning to be felt, that they were ready with implements and arts when that necessity began to be urgent. And we believe that this has been the order of things from the earliest days down: we believe that God who has appointed labor as man's inheritance because best adapted to a state of moral discipline, has also crowned labor with such measures of success as should just meet existing wants, but not supersede the necessity for fresh efforts. This is wonderfully observable with regard to all those surprising inventions which have multiplied man's power almost beyond human calculation. The mighty steam engine, which now does with ease what would have required and baffled an army; and the machine which a child can

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manage which effects the work of a thousand hands—these have practically no tendency to produce idleness or even distress; on the contrary, they are but means through which industry is enabled to meet increased demands, and every one is now busier though the vapor and the wheel have apparently taken his business on themselves. This is a very beautiful and striking arrangement of Divine Providence. Man is allowed to acquire prodigious powers, and those powers are augmenting with such amazing rapidity, that one hardly dares surmise what they may be in a few more years; but nevertheless, through some mysterious order of God, these powers are never more than commensurate with the demand; employment grows with every discovery that you might have thought likely to encourage idleness if not make it an inevitable lot—and this is the first point of view under which we desire to present to you our text. There is an extraordinary display of the carefulness and wisdom of God in those arrangements through which practically industry and discovery are made to go hand in hand. If nothing had been left to human invention, if all the arts and manufactures of civilised life had been matter from the first of explicit revelation, it may well be supposed that the mind of man would have grown listless through the want of sufficient stimulus for its powers; and hence it has been a most merciful appointment that man has been so circumstanced as to be compelled to use his faculties, that he has been necessitated to search out methods for sharpening the blunted edge of iron. But then it might have been expected that as discovery grew and nature gave up to human search her secrets and her powers, there would cease to be a sufficient demand for labor, so that man would escape from that most wise and benevolent ordinance, “in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” If in the earlier days of our race man’s progress in useful arts could have been foreseen, if his course could have been traced as he advanced from the rude instrument with which he could scarce turn the clod, to the varied and powerful implements which now make the mountain and the valley obedient to his wants, from the simplest contrivances which just sheltered him from the elements, to the wonder-working machines which make those elements his servants, and scatter over a land the clothing of its thousands, why the prognostication must have been that so vast an increase in power would bring with it an indisposition to exertion, and that men would settle into an indifference fatal to all moral greatness. But God has taken care to defeat such prognostication, and has provided, as we have shown, that the progress of discovery should keep pace with the progress of population, that wants should multiply just as fast as the means of supply, and that thus idleness should be no more at men’s option when they had pressed into their service all the agencies of nature, than when they stood alone upon the earth, ignorant of its simplest properties, and had not developed the most ordinary resources. Oh! I do look on this as strikingly indicative of God’s goodness in his providential arrangements. To bring the mat-

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ter under the imagery of our text, he might have afforded man no means of whetting the edge, and then man, compelled to put to more strength, must have spent his days in the worst drudgery, and there never could have been constructed the goodly fabric of a diversified community. On the other hand, he might have given man such a power of whetting the edge as would have destroyed all necessity for putting out his strength, and then there must have followed that universal dissoluteness which would be necessarily the produce of universal idleness. But God has guarded equally against both these disastrous results. The edge may be so whetted that man's strength shall not be overtaken; the edge cannot be so whetted that man's strength is no longer needful. Wonderful, then, art thou, O God, in thy providential arrangements! I see all that is worthy of thee in the ordinance that demands human industry; I see all that is worthy of thee in the limits that have been set to human discovery, and I extract nothing but cause for admiring and adoring God in his dealings with our race, from meditation on this simple but comprehensive appointment, "If the iron be blunt and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct."

Now, up to this point we have taken a very general view of our text, but one, we think, that has enabled us to survey Divine Providence under a most interesting aspect. We will now bring before you more precise illustrations of the passage, but still under such forms as may best excite you to observe and to praise the benevolence of God. It is the property, we might almost say the infirmity of man, that he cannot give himself incessantly to labour, whether bodily or mental, but must have seasons of relaxation and repose. The iron will grow blunt after having been a certain time in use, and if a man will then go on insisting in using it, there must be a desperate putting forth of strength, which is certain, ere long, to bring about a total prostration. But if he have wisdom to direct him, so that by a lawful recreation he duly whet the edge of his powers, he may, through God's help, long retain his strength and his usefulness. And however in general there may be more cause for fear that men will be too inert than too active, we are still persuaded of the frequency of cases in which the caution most needed is, that men whet the edge. The old proverb which one often hears, and which involves a great fallacy, "better to wear out than to rust out," would seem constructed in opposition to our text, just as if the iron must rust, if it do not rapidly wear out; whereas, the truth is, that although through the putting to more strength the iron will be worn out, it will not be rusted out through the wetting the edge, seeing that in whetting the edge we brighten what we sharpen. And it is melancholy to think how frequently it happens in our seminaries of learning, that youths of high promise, with fine powers of imagination, and of large capacities for science, sink beneath the pressure of an over-tasked mind—working for themselves an early grave, and depriving world of the benefits

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which might have been derived from their literature, or their piety, through the incessant use of the iron, and the continued neglect of the whetting the edge. And it is yet more melancholy to think how many of the ministers of Christ have shortened their period of usefulness, by devoting themselves to their work with uncalculating eagerness, even assuming as their principle the mistaken, or at least misapplied proverb, "better to wear out than to rust out," regarding it as their duty to give themselves no respite, just as though to relax for an instant would mark a failing in their loyalty to God. They must be acting erroneously, though we readily confess there is a beauty in the error which might well cause it to captivate and mislead. They must be acting erroneously, for God is undoubtedly too merciful a master to require—if we may use so homely an expression—that his servants should work themselves to death.

And something of the same kind may be said generally of all men, whatever the nature of their occupations. You are all aware of the obligations that men should devote themselves to various callings, and of the truth that they are all equally serving the Lord Christ when engaged in the diligent performance of their several duties; and I now speak of the duty that, in pursuing their respective vocations, they take care not to overwork their powers, and thus entail upon themselves a premature debility. I believe that such a caution is far enough from out of place in a community like our own, where there is such a vast play for mercantile activity, where one man may be said to urge on another by the boldness of an enterprise, or the hardihood of a speculation. I do not believe that philosophy with all its mystery, nor theology with all its majesty, is more likely than commerce is to engross and work up the mind so as to produce a rash disregard of the consequences of excessive labor. You must all see that where a pursuit is one that has much greater agreement with natural inclination, there is increased likelihood of a man's devoting himself to it without sufficient pause. The clergyman is tasked with an occupation in which it can hardly be said that nature prompts him to excessive exertion; the merchant, on the contrary, has all the wishes in which he was born engaged on the side of his business, and the probabilities, therefore, are far more considerable of his disregarding the bluntness of the iron, and omitting to whet its edge. And we do consider it in every case a sin; and certainly, if in that of the minister, it must be in that of the merchant, to follow an occupation with such unremitting perseverance, that health is thereby sacrificed, and life is thereby shortened. We shrink from the thought and the mention of suicides, but there are other modes of self-destruction beside that of laying violent hands on one's own person. There is the suicide by intemperance, the suicide by over-labor; and we cannot suppose a man altogether innocent in God's sight of the crime of self-destruction, who digs himself a premature grave, through unsparing demands on his mental and bodily powers, any more than another who wastes his strength on guilty pleasures, or daringly

invades the sanctuary of his own life. And we, therefore, derive for all classes a lesson from our text—a lesson that it is as much their duty to relax when they feel their strength overtaken, as it is to persevere whilst that strength is sufficient. It may be a duty to work with the iron whilst it is not blunt, but it is equally a duty to pause and whet the edge when the bluntness is apparent. And we cannot refrain from pointing out with what tender consideration God hath provided intervals of repose, and has made it emphatically a man's own fault if he sink beneath excessive labor. What a beautiful ordinance is that of day and night! How speedily would men exhaust themselves if they were not compelled to the taking rest in sleep! God has not left it altogether optional with man, whether or not he will whet the edge of the iron; he forces him, as it were, to his pillow, and that pillow, with all its softness, acts as a grindstone on which the blunted powers regain their acuteness. Then what a gracious appointment is that of the Sunday! I might almost say that there were comparatively little or no fear of a man's injuring himself by overwork, if he rigidly abstracted one day in seven, and devote it to the duties of religion. We may not doubt that it is in no sense an arbitrary division of time, that which makes every seventh day, rather than every third or every tenth day a Sunday. We must rather believe that God has herein had respect to the powers of the human machine, and that the repose of one day in seven is exactly what is needed to its being kept in healthful play. This is true, even if you set aside the religious uses of the Sunday, and consider only the secular advantages which its institution insures. We believe, as we have already hinted, that where the Sunday is duly observed, there will seldom occur the case of exhausted and overwrought powers; but, on the other hand, when the Sunday has been neglected, where men have made all the seven days, days of anxiety and of labor, we can point to instances as notorious as they are melancholy, of so rapid a derangement, and then so total an overthrow of the whole mental system, that the grave has been soon dug, or the madhouse soon entered. I doubt whether any cause has made more suicides or more maniacs than the making the seventh day a day of business. No doubt—and I have my fears that there is more of this in our communities than appears on the surface—here is a vast deal of what may be called private Sabbath breaking; many a tradesman who closes his shop on the Sunday, perhaps opens his ledger. The Sunday is the day on which systematically he casts up his accounts, and makes out his bills. And there is, moreover, a vast deal of what may be called mental Sabbath breaking; the merchant, though he deserts the counting-house or exchange, takes no pains to dismiss his commerce from his thoughts; on the contrary, perhaps, he encourages himself in meditating and draws others into conversing on the state of the money market, or the prospects of trade; and thus is his mind still kept on the stretch, and allowed no season of thorough refreshment. So that now we can follow up our statements as to the

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necessity and duty of whetting the edge of the iron, by showing you that God has had such gracious respect to your constitution and your wants, and that it is only by deliberately setting yourselves against his most sacred appointments, that you can run much risk of so blunting as to injure the instrument. We can lay down no general rules as to the degree in which business may be extended, and the quantity of labor which a man may safely undertake; but we may at least assert this great principal, that a man has too much of worldly employment on his hands, if it at all require him to make a working day of the Sunday, and that he is too much engrossed with his trade if he cannot forget it on the Sunday, and cease during a few short hours, to calculate and to speculate. And certainly there is no excuse to be found for any one of you who may so strain as to weaken his powers, or to labor in such undue measure, as must rapidly debilitate him for future exertion, when every seventh day gives him at once warning and opportunity—warning that he is so constituted as to need periods of total cessation from secular employment, opportunity of enjoying such cessation. Oh, God hath done all that could be done to prevent that ordinance of labor, which he designed to be in every sense wholesome, from becoming in any sense injurious; seeing, that over and above the refreshing alternation of day and night, he hath appointed a division of time which continually reminds you with the most eloquent persuasiveness, “That if the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct.”

Yes, my beloved brethren, the man who spends his Sunday, religiously remembering that it is God's day and therefore striving to devote it to God's service, necessarily abstracts his mind from secular cares and thus allows it to recover the tone and elasticity which was gradually destroyed under one uniform pressure, and far more than this; in studying the Scriptures and meditating on heaven, in attending the ministrations of the Sanctuary, praying with all fervency, and perhaps visiting the sick and the dying, how is he securing for himself fresh supplies of grace which will strengthen him for the duties and the toils of the week. The repose of a spirit that lives in eternity, the review of his conduct, the renewed consecration of himself to God, all these are specially appropriate to the Sabbath, in the shape, whether of duty or of privilege, which tend manifestly to prepare him for so using the world as not to abuse it; for he is so pursuing his earthly calling as to be neither too much engrossed by its occupations nor distracted by its solicitudes. And happy is the man who can give as his experience, that the Sunday has come to him as a delicious calm after the turmoil of an exciting week, and that after occupying this hallowed day in communion with God and the diligent use of the appointed means of grace, he has found himself enabled to return to his ordinary duties with invigorated powers; and the perplexities of the Saturday have disappeared before the improved strength of the Monday. The iron was blunted, and if he had attempted to proceed without interruption in his labour he must have put to more strength and thus rapidly disabled himself from fulfilling his duties. But he possessed that wisdom which is profitable to direct, wisdom from above, and this taught him to withdraw himself at God's bidding from earthly concerns and to forget time in his anxiety for eternity. And he has found a present reward as he shall do a future; divine grace has come down and in animating him with a hope full of immortality has quickened him for the discharge of every pressing duty. He has been brought into contact with heavenly things and the attrition has sharpened him even for earthly occupations, so that when the iron has been again brought into use the edge is so keen that what seemed adamant was divisible, and what seemed inseparable might be cleft. And without confining attention to the sharpening influence of a well kept Sunday, we may affirm generally that there is a power in religion which makes it a man's best auxiliary in the performance of every day duties. Look, for example, at prayer, that religious act which is possible at all times and in all places; for inasmuch as prayer is the heart speaking to God, at what moment may it not

be offered, from what spot it is excluded; and if a man's habit be that of prayer so that in every undertaking, of difficulty and emergency, his mind turns almost naturally to God, who can deny the likelihood of his being so directed and strengthened and comforted, that it shall be all the same as it would be with the artisan, whose blunted tool should be suddenly sharpened and given fresh into his hands when he was tempted to throw it by as unfit for use. There is a whetting of the edge by relaxation, and of that we have already spoken, and there is a whetting of the edge by religion, and of that we now speak; and we can be confident that where there is the "wisdom that is profitable to direct," a man will find his powers made equal to his duties, and that too through his continually seeking they may be strengthened from above. In many a moment of difficulty, under many a perplexing circumstance the true Christian seeks of God counsel and courage, and finds himself enabled to determine wisely and act firmly. He may have time for nothing but a silent ejaculation, but that throws him on the assistance of God; he may be only just able to plead a promise in prayer, but the bringing his mind into contact with the divine promise is virtually the bringing of the iron to the whetstone, and a keener edge is the instant attestation to the power of the process.

And finally to make one more use of our somewhat singular text, learn from it the hopelessness of any efforts, at renewing our nature and saving our souls, made in our own strength and without help from above. The iron is indeed blunt, all its edge was destroyed when our first fathers sinned and brought the curse upon our race. If we separate the truth taught in our text from the peculiar image by which it is shadowed, we have to press on you the simple but fundamental lesson that you are born with powers which have not had energy enough for the work of repentance and of turning unto God and obeying his commandments, but that supplies of grace are ready for all who will seek them through Christ; and these supplies will make the weak strong, and the ignorant wise, and guide the wandering into the pathway of life. You may according to the prophetic language, "spend money for that which is not bread, and labor for that which satisfieth not." You may think to deliver yourselves, as though reason were sufficient to the teaching your duty, and your native might enough for its performance, but be ye well assured on the authority of God that a Redeemer was provided, because without one, the whole world had been lost. God would not have given his own Son, given him up to ignominy and to death, had not man been wholly without power to regain the forfeited heritage and avert deserved wrath. There is still the iron, but the iron in a state unfit for those moral operations which are required from us as accountable beings; we have still the powers, the faculties, the properties with which Adam was created, but they have all lost their keenness and their strength, and can never unless reset and renewed, avail for the great work of reconciliation to God, and therefore, put away from among you as a perilous delusion the thought that you are in any sense sufficient of yourselves for any of those duties which are required from you as probationers for eternity.

You are complete in Christ, you are nothing out of Christ, "I can do all things," said the great apostle through Christ which strengtheneth me, but the whole of his writings breathe equally the confession I can do nothing if I trust in myself. Be this then the maxim of each amongst us and let our practice accord with our profession, so that for every duty we may seek help through the Mediator and expect heaven only as the purchase of his merits. Make your trial of this and you shall find that the iron, worn though it be and tarnished, is wrought into weapons effectual in the spiritual warfare, till at length what has been of keen-edge enough to carve a path through a thousand foes, shall be found bright enough for the presence of God, though in that presence there shall be nothing that reflects not his image.

WORDS WHICH SAVE.

A Sermon

PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF PADDINGTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 24TH, 1856.

BY THE REV. C. G. SCOTT.

“Who will tell thee words whereby thou and thine house shall be saved.”—ACTS XI. 14.

THERE cannot be a doubt as to the import of these words. They imply that the salvation of Cornelius depended on his hearing certain words. Without hearing them he cannot be saved; through hearing them he shall be saved. So important are these words, that an angel is sent from heaven to earth to put Cornelius in the way of hearing them. So peculiar are they, that the angel is not allowed to speak them himself; they must be uttered only by human lips. So powerful are they, that, in the very act of listening to them, Cornelius and his company received the gift of the Holy Ghost, were evidently converted to God, and judged fit to receive the sacrament of baptism.

Some one may, perhaps, say—these must have been wonderful words, indeed; O, that I had been there to hear them. I wish to be converted to God, but my feeble mind and hard heart shake off every salutary impression before it can yield any fruit; but had I been with Cornelius, and heard these saving words, I should have been effectually convinced and converted to God. You can only say that you *ought* to have been, just as you ought to have been savingly impressed by the word through which, one day, a fellow-worshipper in a neighbouring pew was awakened. But, if it is the very words through which Cornelius was converted that you wish to hear, you may have your wish. They have been recorded for our instruction in the preceding chapter (Acts x. 34—44); and we may now turn to them and read them.—“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all). That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and showed him

openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. To him give all the prophets witness, and through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Such was Peter's memorable discourse.

You say, there is no charm about these words. I have heard and read all this before, without experiencing these mighty results, without finding them to be words of salvation. There is no *charm* about the words; but there is a *power* in the truth which they express—through which these words might have proved long ago, and may yet prove, as effectual for your conversion as they once did for that of Cornelius. If you have not yet felt the power of the truth, the fault is not in the words; for they are substantially the same words that conveyed the truth to Cornelius. The fault is in yourselves, who will not listen to the words—at least, diligently, devoutly, believingly. If you will give earnest heed to them now, I doubt not you may, through grace, find them as powerful and transforming as Cornelius found them. Let us give our minds to the consideration of them with this desire and expectation; and may the Holy Ghost this day make them the channel through which to enter and take up his abode in your hearts. I propose to show that the words addressed to Cornelius are saving words, because they are—

I. Encouraging or hope-inspiring words.

II. Justifying or peace-speaking words.

III. Sanctifying or love-begetting words; fitted to save from Despair, from Guilt, and from Sin.

1. They are encouraging, hope-inspiring words, fitted to save from despair. Some may think that they do not need to be saved from despair. A state of despair is the state of the finally lost in hell; but we are in the land of the living, and the place of hope; we are apt to hope rather too confidently, and ought rather to be warned against presumption. This is true, but extremes meet; and the extreme of presumption is often found in close contact with the extreme of despair. Take the case of any reckless sinner, who sins with a high hand, utterly regardless of consequences. This man angrily and resolutely rejects serious counsel or reproof; and if the feeling with which he does so were expressed in words, it would be—"Let me alone, art thou come to torment me before the time." You know whose words these are—they are the words of lost spirits abandoned to despair. Jesus was about to cast out this legion, and they besought him not to torment them before the time, send them at once to the abyss, but that he would suffer them to enter into a herd of swine. They did not ask Jesus to forgive and accept them, they had no hope of pardon. A short respite from suffering was the highest boon they could ask. The state of unconverted men on earth is not so desperate as this. They may obtain not only a short respite, but complete deliverance. But Satan would persuade them that their case is as desperate as his: and that the only way to escape the pain and fear, caused by the thought of the consequences of sin, is to forget them, to overlook eternity and its interests. Hence they think that to remind them of these things is to torment them before the time. The reckless sinner secretly fears that his case is desperate already. Indeed one very bold but honest sinner has confessed that this was once the case with him. When John Bunyan, on a certain occasion, violently repressed his convictions, and returned recklessly to sin, he did it exclaiming that it was as well to be damned for many sins as for few. This man, who afterwards became so eminent a saint, deliberately concluded that his case was desperate, and his damnation certain, and acted on that conviction. Many are really acting on the same principle, though they dare not confess it; perhaps are not aware of it. We find the same despair expressed in the words of impenitent Israel, in Jeremiah's time (Jer. ii. 25), "There is no hope, no: we have loved strangers, and after them we will go." Still more desperate are the words of the Jews at the crucifixion of Christ—"His blood be on us and our children." Rather than forego their sin, they not only abide the consequences, but invoke them. The heart is not only desperately wicked, but deceitful above all

things; and Satan avails himself of that deceitfulness to drive men between the two opposite extremes of presumption and despair, when he wishes to seduce into sin, saying, there is no danger; when he wishes to keep in sin, to hinder repentance, saying, there is no hope.

The first thing the Gospel shows is that there is hope, even for the chief of sinners. The law has been before it convincing of sin. But, through the man's own former presumption, the conviction is apt to darken into despair, unless it be quickly followed up with hope-inspiring words. When Peter, after the day of Pentecost, addressed the men who had crucified the Saviour, he first set their sin before them, accused them of having slain the Holy One and the Just; and by the blessing of God brought conviction home to them. Immediately they were pricked in their hearts, and exclaimed—"Men and brethren what shall we do?" In these words we do not see even the dawn of hope. Their question is not "What must I do to be saved?" which implies a knowledge that there is a way of salvation, if the inquirer could only find it. But—"What shall we do?" which might be said by one conscious that nothing can be done. Peter meets their despair with words of hope, "Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Here is a universal direction and promise, including "every one" who heard him. Every one of them, then, may be saved—none need despair. So it is with the declaration of St. Paul, "This is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief." If the chief of sinners is included, no one need despair, on account of the number and aggravation of his sins. Sin abounds but grace superabounds.

In the discourse of Peter referred to in the text, his first object is to inspire hope: and he begins, "I perceive God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." Hitherto, God had seemed to be a respecter of persons—had singled out a particular nation as the special or only subjects of his grace. Certainly on them he had bestowed many peculiar privileges; though at no time was he the God of the Jews only—salvation had never been denied to any returning sinner of the Gentiles. The stranger, embracing God's covenant, had been treated as a son. But now this truth is more clearly displayed than formerly: the distinction between Jew and Gentile is at an end—"In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." Cornelius feared God, but he was a Gentile; and might suppose that, on that account, he might have peculiar difficulty in finding acceptance with God. Peter assures him that such a fear is groundless. God is no respecter of persons, and what Peter has further to say, in regard to the way of salvation, is as much intended for Cornelius as for any descendant of Abraham. God does not respect a man's parentage, the colour of his skin, the qualities of his mind; but only asks if he is a returning sinner, or even an inquiring sinner, and addresses to him the general call of the Gospel, which, earnestly and believingly entertained, becomes a personal, powerful, effectual call.

Few inquirers are in the position of Cornelius. His doubts and fears must have been peculiar. But all newly-awakened sinners require to be addressed in hope-inspiring words. They do not deny the general statement that God is merciful; they rather presume too much on it. But that very presumption, as we have seen, leads to despair; and they secretly doubt whether that mercy, which has reached thousands, will ever actually reach them, and carry them to heaven. They show this rather by their actions than their words. Is there any bold sinner here who goes on recklessly adding sin to sin? You do so because you secretly fear your case is desperate. It is not the pleasantness of sin that is the attraction; for you know that the pain is greater than the pleasure. But you have gone such lengths in sin already; you have continued in sin so long; you have resisted so many warnings; you have broken so many resolutions, and even vows, that there is nothing for it but to go on as you have begun, and abide your fate when it comes.

Your soul responds to the sentiment, "There is no hope; no. We have loved strangers, and after them we will go." But there is hope even for you. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. "God is no respecter of persons." The description of persons whom he seeks is sinners. Not those in whose case there is some peculiarity, whose sin is less aggravated than that of others, but all sinners, whatever they may have been in times past, if they will turn from their sins now—if they will seek God now. What do you say to this? "There is hope, yes; even for me. I have loved strangers, but they have deceived and disappointed me—after them I will no longer go. Christ still calls me—to him I will go." If such is your sentiment, for your direction we show further:—

II. These are justifying, peace-speaking words. Cornelius is presented to us in this narrative as a devout worshipper and sincere inquirer after the way of salvation. He had not newly begun his inquiries. It had always been the great question of earnest minds, among the Gentiles, "How shall a man be just before God." But this is one of those questions which man has sagacity enough to propose, but which he has not, of himself, wisdom or knowledge enough to answer. Cornelius had first tried to find peace through heathen sacrifices and services, and had, of course, been disappointed. Then he had gone to live in a land where the true God was worshipped by means of divinely appointed sacrifices and services. At an earlier period, Cornelius might have, through these sacrifices, found acceptance and received the blessing; through them his faith might have been exercised and perfected—in them he might have found the Saviour. But these sacrifices were destined to continue only till Christ should offer his one great sacrifice; after which they lost their meaning and efficacy; hence Cornelius could not find acceptance through them. Though his prayers and alms ascended for a memorial before God, his person was not accepted, his soul was not saved. His prayers and alms went up as a memorial that he needed more light; and as his ignorance was not a guilty ignorance, the light was not withheld; since he had made a good use of the light which he had already, more light was given.

Peter's discourse consists chiefly of a narrative of the leading incidents in the life of Jesus. Peter shows at the outset, that Christ is God, and therefore able to accomplish all that he should undertake. When the way had been prepared for him by John the Baptist, he entered on his ministry, anointed by the Holy Ghost, and armed with divine power—went about continually doing good, destroying the works of the Devil. Peter adds, "Whom they slew and hanged on a tree." We are not to suppose that we have here a complete report of Peter's discourse to Cornelius: we have only a brief, but sufficient, summary of it; and we cannot doubt that at this part of the discourse, when Peter spoke of the death of Christ, he would show the reason why he was slain and hanged on a tree—that he was making a necessary, but sufficient, atonement for sin—that the tree was really an altar on which he presented himself as a sin-offering to expiate the guilt of many, to deliver them from eternal death, the penalty of sin. In Peter's own words, "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree." And that satisfaction which the Son offered the Father accepted, as he proved by raising him from the dead. Thus, provision is made for the sinner's justification and acceptance in the sight of God. Here is the conclusion: "That through his name, whosoever believeth in him should have remission of sins."

This was just the information that Cornelius needed; here he had an answer to the question, How shall a man be just before God? The facts concerning Jesus were not altogether new to Cornelius. These things had not been done in a corner—they were fresh in the memory of those among whom he lived. But hitherto he had not given much heed to them. It was natural that his views on the subject should be much influenced by those to whom he was indebted for his knowledge of the true God. They had rejected Christ—Cornelius had disregarded him. Now, however, he hears from the lips of God's witness a complete account of the Person and glory of Christ, of his life and labours,

of his sufferings and death, and of the great salvation thereby procured; how he had magnified the law and made it honourable, both by obedience and by suffering; how he had vindicated the perfections of his Heavenly Father, showing him to be a just God and a Saviour, just and the justifier of him that believeth; so that God's wrath and displeasure are, in regard to the returning sinner, turned into love and favour. In short, Cornelius heard the message of reconciliation between God and man. That God might be reconciled to the sinner, these things must be done and suffered by Christ. That the sinner may be reconciled to God, these things must be known by the sinner. He must know these things that he may have worthy views of God, of his holiness, righteousness and truth; so that, in pardoning, he is not acting unrighteously, but consistently with all his perfections. The sinner must know these things, that he may have confidence towards God, believe in his gracious intentions towards himself; believe that, having given his Son, he is ready to give the Spirit, and all things necessary to his salvation. The sinner must know these things that he may love God, who has first loved him. In a word, this knowledge is necessary as the foundation of faith, from which all other graces spring. Peter shows that faith is the condition of salvation:—"Through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall have remission of sins." He must with the understanding heart, acquiesce in this method of salvation; and, in order to this, he must be made acquainted with it: that he may be brought into a state of peace with God, he must "know the things that belong unto his peace."

As Cornelius listened, the Spirit accompanied the word with power. His mind was enlightened, his understanding was convinced, his heart was broken and melted, his will was subdued and submitted to the "Lord of all." Christ was recognised as a personal Saviour. Cornelius believed and was saved; he had found the pearl of great price, and was willing to part with all to obtain it; a free, full, sure salvation was revealed to him, and he embraced it, renouncing every other confidence. His prayers, his alms, his good deeds were all renounced as Saviours; through Christ's name, by believing in him, he sought for salvation, and found it. His faith was proved to be real by its fruits. He was saved by faith alone; but not a faith which is alone; a faith which was the germ of a new life, made him a new creature.

"While Peter yet spake, the Spirit fell on all them who heard the word: and they of the Circumcision which believed were astonished, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost; for they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." It would seem that, as on the eve of the Creation, the Spirit of God brooded over the dark waters, expecting the word, directing him to put forth his energy in creating a new world, the same Spirit had been brooding over this company of worshippers, expecting the justifying, peace-speaking words through which he conveys his grace; and while they were being spoken, entered with the word and effected a new Creation. We may hope that the same Spirit has been brooding over this assembly while the Gospel has been preached. He may, at this moment, be dealing personally with some sinner here present, carrying home the word with power; yea, entering with the word. Resist not the Spirit, grieve not the Spirit, quench not the Spirit!

III. The words are sanctifying, love-begetting words. Sanctification is the end of all preaching, and must have been the end of Peter's preaching on this occasion. He shows that the great distinction between one man and another is not the soundness of the man's creed, but the purity and holiness of his heart and life. "He that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." If a man have an unsanctified heart, the sounder his creed the more odious is he in the sight of God. None are accepted but those who fear God and work righteousness.

But do not the words imply that Cornelius feared God, and wrought righteousness already, before hearing Peter's discourse? Yes, up to a certain point; but he requires to aim at a higher standard, and act from purer motives. Cornelius feared God, but his fear was not true filial fear. His ignorance of God must have

given a somewhat slavish character to his fear, and that must have affected the character of his obedience. He gave alms; but we can scarcely believe that he did so from the highest motives. Self-righteousness was the very essence both of heathenism and of Judaism at the time, and it is an instinct of human nature, at all times, till it is better taught; and it is most likely that Cornelius thought his alms would have some share in procuring his salvation. In that case he did not *give* alms, he *sold* them for heavenly blessings. Besides, though Cornelius gave alms, he had not given himself to God; and no less sacrifice was required of him. He must deny self, renounce his carnal delights, crucify the flesh, put off the entire old man, and put on the new. Cornelius had no idea, previously, that such a sacrifice was required of him, and no one of his teachers was qualified to point out the duty to him. Hence it was necessary that he should hear Peter's words, and to this end partly they were spoken.

Peter shows Cornelius that Christ is Lord of all. Hitherto Cornelius had been a good soldier of the Roman army, yielding implicit obedience to his superior officers, and faultless loyalty to the emperor. But Peter tells him of a greater King than Cæsar, who has higher claims on his devotion than any earthly master, whom he must love and serve first of all, and in preference to all, rendering to him a complete, universal, heart-obedience through his own imparted grace. As Peter pointed out this glorious Being to Cornelius, the Spirit, accompanying the word, awakened a new feeling in his heart, loyalty to the King of kings, and prepared Cornelius for renouncing every other lord, and choosing Christ as his Lord; whose will henceforth must be his rule, whose glory must be his aim.

This Lord of all Peter further shows to be Judge of all; who will one day judge the world in righteousness, when he will confound his enemies and bestow the reward of grace on all his faithful followers. He is, therefore, One whose favour we must daily seek, with a view to the sentence, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." By pointing Christ out as Judge, Peter shows Cornelius, and he reminds us, that though justified by faith we shall be judged by works, and the greater our diligence and faithfulness now, the richer will be our rewards hereafter.

But it is not to the hope of rewards only or chiefly that Peter appeals. The great motive to obedience is the fact that this Lord of all and Judge of all, is the same Lord "whom they slew and hanged on a tree;" that this Lord and Judge submitted to the death of the cross, that he might save his people from their sins, and bring them to "fear God and work righteousness." All this Cornelius heard, and felt too, for the first time; and we, who have been familiar with this history from our childhood, can scarcely conceive the intense emotion that must have filled the breast of this newly-enlightened man. With what wonder and interest he contemplates the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh; with what ecstatic joy he reflects that he is a ransomed sinner; that, God helping him, his soul is safe for eternity. With what love and gratitude he begins to "comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of that love which passeth knowledge." "To him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and hath made us kings and priests to God, to him be glory," &c. Cornelius gave vent to his feelings in a song of praise. He sang a new song—the utterance of a new heart, such as none but the Spirit of God could dictate. But the overpowering sentiment of his soul still was what shall I render to the Lord for all his mercies. He had nothing to render but himself; and that he did render, as a living sacrifice, and his after life was destined to be one continued song of praise to the God of his salvation.

The chief lesson we learn from this subject is, that the Word of God, and not the sacraments, is the great means of conversion, and that it is so because the Holy Spirit employs it as the instrument through which he conveys his grace to the soul.

One word in conclusion to each of three classes—the reckless or desperate, the

inquiring and the believer. To the first, I say *Fear* and hope; to the second, *Believe*; to the third, *Love*.

1. To the reckless I say *Fear*. You have already heard the word of salvation and yet are not saved. Perhaps you have sat long under the preaching of the Gospel, and yet remain utterly unimpressed. In that case you have good reason to fear, lest the Gospel message should prove a word of salvation to others and not to you. The word has lost none of its power; to many it is daily becoming the instrument of salvation, but many of you are fast losing your susceptibility. Every appeal that you disregard, every salutary impression that you shake off, every good resolution that you break through, leaves you less likely to be savingly impressed another time: and, therefore, you may well "fear lest a promise being left you of entering into rest you should by any means come short of it."

Fear, therefore, but do not despair. I would have you also to *hope*. After all that has been said perhaps some one may say, "I hope already, by the very constitution of my nature, and hence it is that I trust all will be well with me yet, notwithstanding all you say to frighten me." But this is not the hope that you ought to cherish, which leads to presumption. The hope you are to cherish is united to fear. "The Lord hath pleasure in those that *fear* him, that *hope* in his mercy." Your natural hope is not a "lively hope," for you do not act on it. In spite of this hope, you really act as a desperate man. Suppose a man in business allows his affairs to get into disorder, and at last is afraid even to look into his books. This man still says, all will yet be well; I shall yet extricate myself from my difficulties. He still hopes, but it is hoping against hope; practically he is a desperate man: else he would acquaint himself with the true state of his affairs. But suppose a friend writes him a letter, saying that he will let him have any amount of money, on condition of his balancing his books, and making out a statement of his affairs. The man would then begin to hope in a different way: he would then see his way out of his difficulties, and would not only take comfort from the prospect, he would act on it; comply with the conditions, and obtain the reward. The Gospel is such a letter addressed to you, sinner, not by name but by description; and in it the Saviour offers you a discharge in full, on condition of your coming to a reckoning with God. Here is his gracious proposal:—"Come, now, let us reckon together, though your sins have been as scarlet they shall be as snow; though red like crimson they shall be as wool." Let your hope rest on such a declaration; trust implicitly on him who makes it, and you will find yourself pardoned, justified, saved.

2. To the inquiring I say *Believe*. The words which we have been considering are words of salvation; but only when they are believed and acted on. Cornelius met Peter as an inquirer; but, immediately on receiving the information he sought, he acted on it; he heard the words and embraced the truth. So it ought to be in every case. An inquiring state ought never to be a permanent state. When a question has been answered the time for words is past; the time for action has come. Yet many seem content to continue in an inquiring state during their whole lives. The question they ask is the right one—"What must I do to be saved?" They have already got an answer to their question; but, instead of acting on the information they have received, they go to have their question answered again by other lips, under other circumstances; and they hope that the eloquence of the preacher will produce such an impression on them as shall overcome their sloth and self-indulgence, and so convert them to God. This is a mistaken expectation: Human eloquence may do much; but it cannot change the heart of stone into the heart of flesh. This is the work of the Spirit of God alone; and the instrument he employs is the truth as it is in Jesus—the truth which you know intellectually already. By all means continue to hear and read, as you have opportunity. Faith cometh by hearing, and you need more light; but you can hardly expect a blessing on your hearing till you make a better use of the light you have. Seek more grace, and use the grace already given to you. If you have now clear views of the way of salvation, "enter ye in at the strait gate;" if you assent to the truth, yield to it, and through it you will be saved.

3. To believers I say *Love*. All believers love; this is the evidence that they are believers. But none love as they ought; none love as they have been loved. "The love of many waxeth cold." How is it to be increased, how is the expiring flame of love to be rekindled? By that which kindled it at first. The truth that saves, is the truth that sanctifies. The words to which we have been attending, are designed not only to convert sinners, but to stir up believers, and therefore, we ought to make them our meditation, that we may find fuel for our love. And we must show our love by obedience, by keeping Christ's commandments; especially by doing the offices of love to our fellow-men: seeking to benefit them for time and for eternity. If we have received the truth, we must not keep it to ourselves, but make it known to the multitudes who are perishing for lack of knowledge. Try to commend and spread the Gospel, by your testimony, by your contributions, but especially by your example and influence. Be "living epistles;" be the "salt of the earth;" be "the lights of the world," and "cause your light so to shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may gloryify your Father in heaven."

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 7, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."—Luke xv. 20.

ALL persons engaged in education will tell you that they find it far more difficult to make the mind unlearn its errors than to make it receive truth. If we could suppose a man totally ignorant of anything, we should have a fairer chance of instructing him quickly and effectually than we should have had if his mind had been previously stored with falsehood. I have no doubt you, each of you, find it harder to unlearn than to learn. To get rid of old prejudices and preconceived notions is a very hard struggle indeed. It has been well said, that those few words, "I am mistaken," are the hardest in all the English language to pronounce, and certainly it takes very much force to compel us to pronounce them: and after having done so, it is even then difficult to wipe away the slime which an old serpentine error has left upon the heart. Better for us not to have known at all than to have known the wrong thing. Now, I am sure that this truth is never more true than when it applies to God. If I had been let alone to form my notion of God, entirely from Holy Scripture, I feel, that with the assistance of his Holy Spirit it would have been far more easy for me to understand what he is, and how he governs the world, than to learn even the truths of his own Word, after the mind had become perverted by the opinions of others. Why, brethren, who is it that gives a fair representation of God? The Arminian slanders God by accusing him (not in his own intention, but really so) of unfaithfulness; for he teaches that God may promise what he never performs; that he may give eternal life, and promise that those who have it shall never perish, and yet they may perish after all. He speaks of God as if he was a mutable being, for he talks of his loving men one day, and hating them the next; of his writing their names in the Book of Life one hour, and then erasing their names in the next. And the influence of such an error as that, is very baneful. Many children of God, who have imbibed these errors in early youth, have had to drag along their poor wearied and broken frames for many a day, whereas they might have walked joyfully to heaven if they had known the truth from the beginning. On the other hand, those who hear the Calvinistic preacher, are very apt to misinterpret God. Although we trust we could never speak of God in any other sense than that in which we find him represented in sacred Scripture, yet are we well aware that many of our hearers, even through our assertions, when most guarded, are apt to get rather a caricature of God, than a true picture of him. They imagine that God is a severe being, angry and fierce, very easily to be moved to wrath, but not so easily to be induced to love; they are apt to think of him as one who sits in supreme and lofty state, either totally indifferent to the wishes of his creatures, or else determined to have his own way with them, as an arbitrary Sovereign, never listening to their desires, or compassionate their woes. Oh that we could unlearn all these fallacies, and believe God to be what he is! Oh that we could come to Scripture, and there look into

that glass which reflects his sacred image, and then receive him as he is, the all-Wise, the all-Just, and yet the all-Gracious, and all-Loving Jehovah! I shall endeavour this morning, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, to represent the lovely character of Christ; and if I shall be happy enough to have some in my audience who are in the position of the prodigal son in the parable—coming to Christ, and yet a great way off from him—I shall trust that they will be led by the same Divine Spirit, to believe in the lovingkindness of Jehovah, and so may find peace with God now, ere they leave this house of prayer.

"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." First, I shall notice the *position* intended in the words, "a great way off;" secondly, I shall notice the *peculiar troubles* which agitate the minds of those, who are in this condition; and then, thirdly, I shall endeavour to teach the *great lovingkindness of our own adorable God*, inasmuch as when we are "a great way off," he runs to us, and embraces us in the arms of his love.

I. First, then, what is the position signified by being "a great way off?" I must just notice what is *not* that position. It is not the position of the man who is careless and entirely regardless of God; for you notice that the prodigal is represented now as having come to himself, and as returning to his father's house. Though it be true that all sinners are a great way off from God, whether they know it or not, yet in this particular instance, the position of the poor prodigal is intended to signify the character of one, who has been aroused by conviction, who has been led to abhor his former life, and who sincerely desires to return to God. I shall not, then, this morning, specially address the blasphemer, and the profane. To him, there may be some incidental warning heard, but I shall not specially address such a character. It is another person for whom this text is intended: the man who has been a blasphemer, if you please, who may have been a drunkard, and a swearer, and what not, but who has now renounced these things, and is steadfastly seeking after Christ, that he may obtain eternal life. That is the man who is here said to be, though coming to the Lord, "a great way off."

Once again, there is another person who is not intended by this description, namely, the very great man, the Pharisee who thinks himself extremely righteous, and has never learned to confess his sin. You, sir, in your apprehension, are not a great way off. You are so really in the sight of God; you are as far from him as light from darkness, as the east is from the west; but you are not spoken of here. You are like the prodigal son, only that instead of spending your life righteously, you have run away from your Father, and hidden in the earth the gold which he gave you, and are able to feed upon the husks which swine do eat, whilst by a miserable economy of good works you are hoping to save enough of your fortune to support yourself here and in eternity. Your hope of self-salvation is a fallacy, and you are not addressed in the words of the text. It is the man who knows himself lost, but desires to be saved, who is here declared to be met by God, and received with affectionate embraces.

And now we come to the question, Who is the man, and why is he said to be a great way off? For he seems to be very near the kingdom, now that he knows his need and is seeking the Saviour. I reply, in the first place, he is a great way off in his own apprehensions. You are here this morning, and you have an idea that never was man so far from God as you are. You look back upon your past life, and you recollect how you have slighted God, despised his Sabbath, neglected his Book, trampled upon the blood of sprinkling, and rejected all the invitations of his mercy. You turn over the pages of your history, and you remember the sins which you have committed—the sins of your youth and your former transgressions, the crimes of your manhood, and the riper sins of your older years; like black waves dashing upon a dark shore, they roll in wave upon wave, upon your poor troubled memory. There comes a little wave of your childish folly, and over that there leaps one of your youthful transgressions, and over the head of this there comes a very Atlantic billow of your manhood's transgressions. At the sight of them you stand astonished and amazed. "O Lord my God, how deep is the guilt which divides me from thyself, and where is the power that can bridge it? I am separated from thee by leagues of sin, whole mountains of my guilt are piled upwards between me and thyself. O God, shouldst thou destroy me now, thou wouldest be just; and if thou dost ever bring me to thyself, it must be nothing less than a power as Omnipotent as that which made the world, which can ever do it.

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Oh! how far am I from God!" Some of you would be startled this morning, if your neighbours were to give you revelations of their own feelings. If yonder man standing there in the crowd could come into this pulpit, and tell out what he now feels, you might perhaps be horrified at his description of his own heart. How many of you have no notion of the way in which a soul is cut and hacked about, when it is under the convictions of the law! If you should hear the man tell out what he feels, you would say, "Ah! he is a poor deluded enthusiast; men are not so bad as that;" or else you would be apt to think he had committed some nameless crime which he dare not mention, that was preying on his conscience. Nay, sir, he has been as moral and as upright as you have been; but should he describe himself as he now discovers himself to be, he would shock you utterly. And yet you are the same, though you feel it not, and would indignantly deny it. When the light of God's grace comes into your heart, it is something like the opening of the windows of an old cellar that has been shut up for many days. Down in that cellar, which has not been opened for many months, are all kinds of loathsome creatures, and a few sickly plants blanched by the darkness. The walls are dark and damp with the trail of reptiles; it is a horrid filthy place in which no one would willingly enter. You may walk there in the dark very securely, and except now and then for the touch of some alimpy creature, you would not believe the place was so bad and filthy. Open those shutters, clean a pane of glass, let a little light in, and now see how a thousand noxious things have made this place their habitation. Sure, 'twas not the light that made this place so horrible, but it was the light that showed how horrible it was before. So let God's grace just open a window and let the light into a man's soul, and he will stand astonished to see at what a distance he is from God. Yes, sir, to-day you think yourself second to none but the Eternal; you fancy that you can approach his throne with steady step; it is but a little that you have to do to be saved; you imagine that you can accomplish it at any hour, and save yourself upon your dying bed as well as now. Ah! sir, if you could but be touched by Ithuriel's wand, and made to be in appearance what you are in reality, then you would see that you are far enough from God even now, and so far from him, that unless the arms of his grace were stretched out to bring you to himself, you must perish in your sin. Now I turn my eye again with hope, and trust I have not a few in this large assembly, who can say, "Sir, I feel I am far from God, and sometimes I fear I am so far from him, that he will never have mercy upon me; I dare not lift so much as my eyes towards heaven; I smite on my breast, and say, 'Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner.'" Oh! poor heart; here is a comforting passage for thee: "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him."

But again, there is a second sense in which some now present feel themselves to be far off from God. Conscience tells every man that if he would be saved he must get rid of his sin. The Antinomian may possibly pretend to believe that men can be saved while they live in sin; but conscience will never allow any man to swallow so egregious a lie as that. I have not one person in this congregation who is not perfectly assured that if he is to be saved he must leave off his drunkenness and his vices. Sure there is not one here so stupefied with the laudanum of hellish indifference as to imagine that he can revel in his lusts, and afterwards wear the white robe of the redeemed in Paradise. If ye imagine ye can be partakers of the blood of Christ, and yet drink the cup of Belial; if ye imagine that ye can be members of Satan and members of Christ at the same time, ye have less sense than one would give you credit for. No, you know that right arms must be cut off, and right eyes plucked out—that the most darling sins must be renounced, if ye would enter into the kingdom of God. And I have a man here who is convinced of the unholiness of his life, and he has striven to reform, not because he thinks reformation would save him, for he knows better than that, but because he knows that this is one of the first fruits of grace—reformation from sin. Well, poor man, he has for many years been an inveterate drunkard, and he struggles now to overcome the passion. He has almost effected it; but he never had such an Herculean labour to attempt before; for now some temptation comes upon him so strongly, that it is as much as he can do to stand against it; and perhaps sometimes since his first conviction of sin he has even fallen into it. Or perhaps it is another vice, and you, my brother, have set your face against it; but there are many bonds and fetters that bind us to our vices, and you find that though it was

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easy enough to spin the warp and woof of sin together; it is not so easy to unravel that which you have spun. You cannot purge your house of your idols; you do not yet know how to give up all your lustful pleasures. Not yet can you renounce the company of the ungodly. You have cut off one by one your most intimate acquaintances, but it is very hard to do it completely, and you are struggling to accomplish it, and you often fall on your knees and cry, "O Lord, how far I am from thee! what high steps these are which I have to climb! Oh! how can I be saved? Sure, if I cannot purge myself from my old sins, I shall never be able to hold on my way; and even should I get rid of them, I should plunge into them once more." You are crying out, "Oh, how great my distance from God! Lord, bring me near!"

Let me present you with one other aspect of our distance from God. You have read your Bible, and you believe that faith alone can unite the soul to Christ. You feel that unless you can believe in him who died upon the cross for your sins, you can never see the kingdom of God; but you can say this morning, "Sir, I have striven to believe; I have searched the Scriptures, not hours, but days together, to find a promise upon which my weary foot might rest; I have been upon my knees many and many a time, earnestly supplicating a divine blessing; but though I have pleaded, all in vain have I urged my plea, for until now no whisper have I had of grace, no token for good, no sign of mercy. Sir, I have striven to believe, and I have said,

'O could I but believe!
Then all would easy be;
I would, but cannot—Lord, relieve,
My help must come from thee!'

I have used all the power I have, and have desperately striven to cast myself at the Saviour's feet and see my sins washed away in his blood. I have not been indifferent to the story of the cross; I have read it a hundred times, and even wept over it; but when I strive to put my hand upon the scape-goat's head, and labour to believe that my sins are transferred to him, some demon seems to stop the breath that would breathe itself forth in adoration, and something checks the hand that would lay itself upon the head that died for me." Well, poor soul, thou art indeed far from God. I will repeat the words of the text to thee. May the Holy Spirit repeat them in thine ear! "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." So shall it be with thee if thou hast come thus far, though great may be the distance, thy feet shall not have to travel it, but God the Eternal One shall from his throne look down and visit thy poor heart, though now thou tarriest by the way afraid to approach him.

II. Our second point is the PECULIAR TROUBLES which agitate the breasts of those who are in this position. Let us introduce to you the poor ragged prodigal. After a life of ease, he is by his own vice plunged into penury and labour. After feeding swine for a time, and being almost starved, he sets about returning to his father's house. It is a long and weary journey. He walks many a mile until his feet are sore, and at last from the summit of a mountain he views his father's house far away in the plain. There are yet many miles between him and his father whom he has neglected. Can you conceive his emotions when for the first time after so long an absence he sees the old house at home? He remembers it well in the distance, for though it is long since he trod its floors he has never ceased to recollect it; and the remembrance of his father's kindness, and of his own prosperity when he was with him, has never yet been erased from his consciousness. You would imagine that for one moment he feels a flash of joy, like some flash of lightning in the midst of the tempest, but anon a black darkness comes over his spirit. In the first place, it is probable he will think, "Oh! suppose I could reach my home, will my father receive me? Will he not shut the door in my face and tell me to begone and spend the rest of my life where I have been spending the first of it?" Then another suggestion might arise: "Surely, the demon that led me first astray may lead me back again, before I salute my parent." "Or mayhap" thought he, "I may even die upon the road, and so before I have received my father's blessing my soul may stand before its God." I doubt not each of these three thoughts has

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crossed your mind if you are now in the position of one who is seeking Christ, but mourns to feel himself far away from him.

First, you have been afraid lest you should die before Christ has appeared to you. You have been for months seeking the Saviour without finding him, and now the black thought comes, "And what if I should die with all these prayers unanswered? Oh! if he would but hear me ere I departed this world I would be content, though he should keep me waiting in anguish for many years. But what, if before to-morrow morning I should be a corpse? At my bed I kneel to-night and cry for mercy. Oh! if he should not send the pardon before to-morrow morning, and in the night my spirit should stand before his bar!—What then?" It is singular that other men think they shall live for ever, but men convinced of sin, who seek a Saviour, are afraid they shall not live another moment. You have known the time, dear Christian brethren, when you dared not shut your eyes for fear you should not open them again on earth; when you dreaded the shadows of the night lest they should darken for ever the light of the sun, and you should dwell in outer darkness throughout eternity. You have mourned as each day has entered, and you have wept as it has departed, because you fancied that your next step might precipitate you into your eternal doom. I have known what it is to tread the earth and fear lest every tuft of grass should but cover a door to hell; trembling, lest every particle, and every atom, and every stone, should be so at league with God against me, as to destroy me. John Bunyan says, that at one time in his experience, he felt that he had rather have been born a dog or a toad than a man; he felt so unutterably wretched on account of sin; and his great point of wretchedness was the fact, that though he had been three years seeking Christ, he might after all die without finding him. And in truth, this is no needless alarm. It may be perhaps too alarming to some who already feel their need of Christ, but the mass of us need perpetually to be startled with the thought of death. How few of you ever indulge that thought! Because ye live and are in health, and eat, and drink, and sleep, ye think ye shall not die. Do ye ever soberly look at your last end? Do ye ever, when ye come to your beds at night, think how one day ye shall undress for the last slumber? And when ye wake in the morning, do ye never think that the trumpet of the archangel shall startle you to appear before God in the last day of the great assize, wherein an universe shall stand before the Judge? No. "All men think all men mortal but themselves;" and thoughts of death we still push off, until at last we shall find ourselves waking up in torment, where to wake is to wake too late. But thou to whom I specially speak this morning, thou who feelest that thou art a great way off from Christ, thou shalt never die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord; if thou hast really sought him, thou shalt never die until thou hast found him. There was never a soul yet, that sincerely sought the Saviour, who perished before he found him. No; the gates of death shall never shut on thee till the gates of grace have opened for thee; till Christ has washed thy sins away thou shalt never be baptized in Jordan's flood. Thy life is secure, for this is God's constant plan—he keeps his own elect alive till the day of his grace, and then he takes them to himself. And inasmuch as thou knowest thy need of a Saviour, thou art one of his, and thou shalt never die until thou hast found him.

Your second fear is, "Ah, sir! I am not afraid of dying before I find Christ, I have a worse fear than that; I have had convictions before, and they have often passed away; my greatest fear to-day is, that these will be the same." I have heard of a poor collier, who on one occasion, having been deeply impressed under a sermon, was led to repent of sin and forsake his former life; but he felt so great a horror of ever returning to his former conversation, that one day he knelt down and cried thus unto God, "O Lord, let me die on this spot, rather than ever deny the religion which I have espoused, and turn back to my former conversation;" and we are credibly told, that he died on that very spot, and so his prayer was answered. God had rather take him home to heaven than suffer him to bear the brunt of temptation on earth. Now, when men come to Christ, they feel that they had rather suffer anything than lose their convictions. Scores of times have you and I been drawn to Christ under the preaching of the Word. We can look back upon dozens of occasions on which it seemed just the turning point with us. Something said in our hearts, "Now, believe in Christ, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." But we said, "To-morrow, to-morrow;" and when to-morrow came our convictions were gone. We thought what we said yesterday would be the deed of to-day; but instead of it, the

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procrastination of yesterday became the hardened wickedness of to-day: we wandered farther from God and forgot him. Now you are crying to him for fear, lest he should give you up again. You have this morning prayed before you came here, and you said, "Father, suffer not my companions to laugh me out of my religion; let not my worldly business so engross my thoughts, as to prevent my due attention to the matters of another world. Oh, let not the trifles of to-day so absorb my thoughts that I may not be preparing myself to meet my God—"

‘Deeply on my thoughtful heart,
Eternal things impress,’

and make this a real saving work that shall never die out, nor be taken from me.' Is that your earnest prayer? O poor prodigal, it shall be heard, it shall be answered. Thou shalt not have time to go back. To-day thy Father views thee from his throne in heaven; to-day he runs to thee in the message of his gospel; to-day he falls upon thy neck and weeps for joy; to-day he says to thee, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven;" to-day, by the preaching of the Word, he bids thee come and reason with him, "for though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool, though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow."

But the last and the most prominent thought which I suppose the prodigal would have, would be, that when he did get to his father, he would say to him, "Get along with you, I will have nothing more to do with you." "Ah!" thought he to himself, "I recollect the morning when I rose up before day-break, because I knew I could not stand my mother's tears; I remember how I crept down the back staircase and took all the money with me, how I stole down the yard and ran away into the land where I spent my all. Oh! what will the old gentleman say of me when I come back? Why, there he is! He is running to me. But he has got a horsewhip with him, to be sure, to whip me away. It is not at all possible that if he comes he will have a kind word for me. The most I can expect is that he will say, 'Well John, you have wasted all your money, you cannot expect me to do anything for you again. I won't let you starve; you shall be one of my servants; there, come, I will take you as footman;' and if he will do that I will be obliged to him; nay, that is the very thing I will ask of him; I will say, 'Make me as one of thy hired servants.'" "Oh," said the devil within him, "your father will never speak comfortably to you: you had better run away again. I tell you if he gets near you, you will have such a dressing as you never received in your life. You will die with a broken heart; you will very likely fall dead here; the old man will never bury you; the carrion crows will eat you. There is no hope for you: see how you have treated him. Put yourself in his place: what would you do if you had a son that had run away with half your living, and spent it upon harlots?" And the son thought if he were in his father's place he should be very harsh and severe; and possibly, he almost turned upon his heel to run away. But he had not time to do that. When he was just thinking about running away, on a sudden his father's arms were about his neck, and he had received the paternal kiss. Nay, before he could get his whole prayer finished, he was arrayed in a white robe, the best in the house; and they had brought him to the table, and the fatted calf was being killed for his repast. And poor soul, it shall be so with you. Thou sayest, "If I go to God, he will never receive me. I am too vile and wretched; others he may have pressed to his heart, but he will not me. If my brother should go, he might be saved; but there are such aggravations in my crime; I have grown so old since; I have done such a deal of mischief; I have so often blasphemed him, so frequently broken his Sabbaths; ah! and I have so often deceived him; I have promised I would repent, and when I have got well I have lied to God, and gone back to my old sin. Oh, if he would but let me creep inside the door of heaven! I will not ask to be one of his children; I will only ask that he will let me be where the Syro-Phœnician woman desired to be—to be a dog, to eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table. That is all I ask; and oh! if he will but grant it to me, he shall never hear the last of it, for as long as I live I will sing his praise; and when the world doth fade away, and the sun grow dim with age, my gratitude, immortal as my soul, shall never cease to sing his love, who pardoned my grossest sins and washed me in his blood." It shall be so. Come and try. Now, sinners, dry your tears; let hopeless sorrows cease; look to the wounds of Christ, who died; let all your griefs now be

THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN.

removed, there is no further cause for them: your Father loves you; he accepts and receives you to his heart.

III. Now, in conclusion, I may notice HOW THESE FEARS WERE MET IN THE PRODIGAL'S CASE, and how they shall be met in ours if we are in the same condition.

The text says, "The Father saw him." Yes, and God saw thee just now. That tear which was wiped away so hastily—as if thou wast ashamed of it—God saw it, and he stored it in his bottle. That prayer which thou didst breathe just a few moments ago, so faintly, and with such little faith—God heard it. The other day thou wast in thy chamber, where no ear heard thee; but God was there. Sinner, let this be thy comfort, that God sees thee when thou beginnest to repent. He does not see thee with his usual gaze, with which he looks on all men; but he sees thee with an eye of intense interest. He has been looking on thee in all thy sin, and in all thy sorrow, hoping that thou wouldst repent; and now he sees the first gleam of grace, and he beholds it with joy. Never warder on the lonely castle top saw the first grey light of morning with more joy than that with which God beholds the first desire in thy heart. Never physician rejoiced more when he saw the first heaving of the lungs in one that was supposed to be dead, than God doth rejoice over thee, now that he sees the first token for good. Think not that thou art despised, and unknown, and forgotten. He is marking thee from his high throne in glory, and rejoicing in what he sees. He saw thee pray, he heard thee groan, he marked thy tear; he looked upon thee and rejoiced to see that these were the first seeds of grace in thine heart.

And then, the text says, "he had compassion on him." He did not merely see him, but he wept within himself to think he should be in such a condition. The old father had a very long range of eye-sight; and though the prodigal could not see him in the distance, he could see the prodigal. And the father's first thought when he saw him was this—"O my poor son, O my poor boy! that ever he should have brought himself into such a state as this!" He looked through his telescope of love, and he saw him, and said, "Ah! he did not go out of my house in such trim as that. Poor creature, his feet are bleeding; he has come a long way, I'll be bound. Look at his face; he doesn't look like the same boy that he was when he left me. His eye that was so bright, is now sunken in its socket; his cheeks that once stood out with fatness, have now become hollow with famine. Poor wretch, I can tell all his bones, he is so emaciated." Instead of feeling any anger in his heart, he felt just the contrary; he felt such pity for his poor son. And that is how the Lord feels for you—you that are groaning and moaning on account of sin. He forgets your sins; he only weeps to think you should have brought yourself to be what you are: "Why didst thou rebel against me, and bring thyself into such a state as this?" It was just like that day when Adam sinned. God walked in the garden, and he missed Adam. He did not cry out, "Adam, come here and be judged!" No; with a soft, sorrowful, and plaintive voice, he said, "Adam, where art thou? Oh, my fair Adam, thou whom I made so happy, where art thou now? Oh, Adam! thou didst think to become a God; where art thou now? Thou hast walked with me; dost thou hide thyself from thy friend? Little dost thou know, Oh Adam, what woes thou hast brought on thyself, and thine offspring. Adam, where art thou?" And Jehovah's bowels yearn to-day over you. He is not angry with you; his anger is passed away, and his hands are stretched out still. Inasmuch as he has brought you to feel that you have sinned against him, and to desire reconciliation with him, there is now no wrath in his heart. The only sorrow that he feels is sorrow that you should have brought yourself into a state so mournful as that in which you now are found.

But he did not stop in mere compassion. Having had compassion, "he ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." This you do not understand yet; but you shall. As sure as God is God, if you this day are seeking him aright through Christ, the day shall come when the kiss of full assurance shall be on your lip, when the arms of sovereign love shall embrace you, and you shall know it to be so. Thou mayest have despised him, but thou shalt know him yet to be thy Father and thy Friend. Thou mayest have scoffed his name; thou shalt one day come to rejoice in it as better than pure gold. Thou mayest have broken his Sabbaths and despised his Word; the day is coming when the Sabbath shall be thy delight, and his Word thy treasure. Yea, marvel not; thou mayest have plunged into the kennel of sin and made thy clothes black with iniquity; but thou shalt one day

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stand before his throne white as the angels be; and that tongue that once cursed him shall yet sing his praise. If thou be a real seeker, the hands that have been stained with lust shall one day grasp the harp of gold, and the head that has plotted against the Most High shall yet be girt with gold. Seemeth it not a strange thing that God should do so much for sinners? But strange though it seem, it shall be strangely true. Look at the staggering drunkard in the ale-house. Is there a possibility that one day he shall stand amongst the fairest sons of light? Possibility! ay, certainly, if he repents and turns from the error of his ways. Hear you you curser and swearer? See you the man who labels himself as a servant of hell, and is not ashamed to do so? Is it possible that he shall one day share the bliss of the redeemed? Possible! ay, more, it is sure, if he turneth from his evil ways. O sovereign grace, turn men that they may repent! "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

"Lord do thou the sinner turn,
For thy tender mercies sake!"

One word or so, and I have done. If any of you to-day are under conviction of sin, let me solemnly warn you not to frequent places where those convictions are likely to be destroyed.

A correspondent of the *New York Christian Advocate* furnishes the following affecting narrative:—

"When I was travelling in the state of Massachusetts, twenty-six years ago, after preaching one evening in the town of ———, a very serious-looking young man arose, and wished to address the assembly. After obtaining leave, he spoke as follows:—'My friends, about one year ago, I set out in company with a young man of my intimate acquaintance, to seek the salvation of my soul. For several weeks we went on together, we laboured together, and often renewed our covenant never to give over seeking till we obtained the religion of Jesus. But, all at once, the young man neglected attending meeting, appeared to turn his back on all the means of grace, and grew so shy of me, that I could scarcely get an opportunity to speak with him. His strange conduct gave me much painful anxiety of mind; but still I felt resolved to obtain the salvation of my soul, or perish, making the publican's plea. After a few days, a friend informed me that my young companion had received an invitation to attend a ball, and was determined to go. I went immediately to him, and, with tears in my eyes, endeavoured to persuade him to change his purpose, and to go with me on that evening to a prayer-meeting. I pleaded with him in vain. He told me, when we parted, that I must not give him up as lost, for after he had attended that ball, he intended to make a business of seeking religion. The appointed evening came, and he went to the ball, and I went to the prayer-meeting. Soon after the meeting opened, it pleased God, in answer to my prayer, to turn my spiritual captivity, and make my soul rejoice in his justifying love. Soon after the ball opened, my young friend was standing at the head of the ball-room, with the hand of a young lady in his hand, preparing to lead down the dance; and, while the musician was turning his violin, without one moment's warning, the young man sallied back, and fell dead on the floor. I was immediately sent for, to assist in devising means to convey his remains to his father's house. You will be better able to judge what were the emotions of my heart, when I tell you that that young man was my own brother.'"

Trifle not, then, with thy convictions, for eternity shall be too short for thee to utter thy lamentations over such trifling.

Exeter Hall Sermons.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 7, 1858,

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM CHALMERS.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."—ROM. 1. 16, 17.

It is difficult for us to form any idea of the scorn which pursued the first preachers of the Gospel. To us Christianity appears in all the light and glory which eighteen centuries of triumph have accumulated around it; but when it first entered into the world, nothing seemed so weak and contemptible. It was universally regarded as an impudent fable or a wretched superstition; and those who taught it were either jeered at as babblers or denounced as fanatics, and made "as the filth of the earth and the offscouring of all things." The great subject of their ministry was "Christ crucified"—not the truths of natural religion, however clearly presented; not the precepts of moral virtue, however powerfully enforced; but the incarnation of the Son of God, His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, as the only atonement for the sin of man, and the only way of reconciliation with an offended God. And no doctrine could be more repulsive to carnal reason and to human pride. "To the Jews" it was "a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." The Greeks, who delighted in philosophic speculation and ingenious subtleties, deemed it utterly irrational, pronounced it the wildest folly, to worship as a God one whom his own countrymen had treated as a felon slave, and to look for blessedness at the hands of one who had been made a curse: while to the Jews it was a scandal and an offence, enough to make curses burn upon their lips, and fury lighten in their eye, to be told that that same Jesus whom they had crucified was man's Lord and God's Christ, and that the only hope of their nation was to be found in the name of a despised Galilean and the cross of a rejected Nazarene. But such was the message which the first preachers of the Gospel actually brought to Jew and Gentile; such the doctrine which they went into all the world to herald and proclaim; and, in consequence, they encountered a tide of insolent derision and malignant scorn, so broad, so deep, so furious, that nothing but an imperious

conviction of its truth, nothing but an unbounded confidence in the omnipotence of Him in whose name they spoke, could have enabled them to withstand it. Nevertheless, they nobly stemmed that tide; ay, and in the end they gloriously turned it; and that Jesus who expired upon the cross, they preached to every creature as the only, the divinely appointed Saviour; and with that as their single and perpetual theme, regardless of reproach, undaunted by opposition, unmoved by bonds, they steadily and painfully traversed every accessible region, and crossed every encircling sea, until at last the wanderer fainted upon his solitary path, or the martyr, amidst the shouts of thousands, sank beneath the flashing sword, exhibiting thus a strength of conviction, a firmness of purpose, a grandeur of moral heroism, such as the world has rarely witnessed, such as attested their commission to be divine.

And the foremost in that work was the noble and intrepid Apostle Paul. It might have been supposed that in Rome, the magnificent capital of the Cæsars, the metropolis of the world, the proud seat and centre of learning and refinement—it might have been supposed that among the sages and philosophers, the poets and painters, the orators and historians of the Augustine age, among men most likely to take offence at the doctrine of redemption through the blood of the despised and crucified Jesus, Paul would in some degree modify his statements, so as to render them less unpalatable, and by skilful shading adapt his arguments to cultivated tastes. But no; not one jot or tittle would he abate of its humbling articles; not for one moment would he stoop to measures of accommodation or compromise; and, just in proportion as the soil into which the Gospel seed was cast seemed ill-fitted to receive it, was he careful widely to scatter it; and there, where pride and prejudice had their perfect reign, he was the boldest; there, where enmity was the fiercest and defiance the loudest, he was the most clear and emphatic and decided; and oh! if ever the insinuation was made, that although he might be fearless and outspoken in declaring the message of Christianity, in distant provinces and among barbarous tribes, yet, once confronted with all that was learned and all that was distinguished on the earth, he would lower his tone, he would disguise the truth, he would keep in the background what was distasteful, and give prominence to what he believed would be the least revolting;—how unfounded the suspicion let the words before us testify: “‘I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also.’ Why should I shrink from it? Why should I conceal it? Why should I distort it? Why be reluctant to publish it, in all its unvarnished truth and naked simplicity? ‘I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.’ Despised by men as worthless, it is chosen of God and precious; derided by men as weak, it is an instrument mighty in the hands of the divine Spirit. It is ‘the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.’”

“Salvation!” That is the design of the Gospel, the great object it has in view, the grand blessing which it brings. It supposes men to be guilty, transgressors of Heaven’s high and holy law, condemned by that sentence which saith, “The soul that sinneth it shall die;”—as certainly doomed to the death which the law denounces as you wretched criminal, who in a few hours will suffer upon the scaffold, and swing a lifeless corpse upon the gallows-tree. Yes, the Gospel deals with men as condemned, undone, ruined, lost. Oh! there is something in that word “lost” which falls on our ear like a very death-knell. Ay, that is the soul’s condition when the Gospel reaches it. “Lost!” Lost to God—lost to itself—lost to heaven—lost to hope—lost to purity, to peace, to life, and all that that mysterious word “life” involves in the vast world, beyond this narrow spot of earth,—and lost for ever! Salvation! that is the inestimable boon which the Gospel brings, It announces it; it offers it; it points the way to it; it lays bare God’s mode of bestowing it; it is efficacious in securing it. It is “the power of God unto salvation;” that through which He manifests His saving power; an instrument in His hands, mighty to save; mighty to deliver men from that condemnation of a broken law and the terrors of a

coming wrath—mighty to deliver men from the misery of the curse, and the practice and the love and the dominion of sin. And how? and why? "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

What is this "righteousness of God" which the Gospel reveals, and which makes it divinely efficacious in saving men? That is the question: what is this righteousness? A more important word is not to be found in Scripture; and the meaning of that word is the key to the whole of the epistle before us. Sometimes "righteousness of God" in Scripture, means the Divine attribute of justice—God's holiness, rectitude, love of truth. But that is not the meaning here; for the Gospel does not reveal the justice, so much as it reveals the mercy of God; and it derives its saving power, surely, not from disclosing to us that perfection of the Divine nature which is irreconcilably opposed to sin, and draws the sword against the sinner, but from disclosing that which is the shield and the security of the sinner. But "righteousness," besides meaning justice, equity, means also, conformity to law,—that obedience, that complete and meritorious excellence which the law requires; that which, when it is rendered, makes a man just, or righteous in the eye of the law, so that he can stand in the judgment; that which fulfils and satisfies all the demands of justice and of law, so that he can claim acquittal and reward. And such a righteousness the Gospel reveals. Man has it not in himself; he has lost his righteousness, he lies under condemnation and curse; but God has provided a righteousness for him, which, being placed to his account, he is acquitted from guilt, he is "justified," in the Scripture term, he is freed from condemnation, and receives a title to eternal life. And what other righteousness can be meant than the righteousness of God's Incarnate Son, the obedience and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ,—His perfect conformity to the Divine law,—all that He did and all that He endured, in life and in death, as the substitute and the surety of guilty men? *That* is the righteousness which it is the grand design of the Gospel to reveal, and to offer to all sinners as the ground and the reason of their pardon and their acceptance with God, and their receiving and enjoying all the blessings of salvation. Such is the meaning of the remarkable expression, "the righteousness of God." It is the obedience of the Son of God to the law in its demands of precept and of penalty—His conformity, in life and in death, to all the claims of justice. And to understand any thing else by it, when spoken in connexion with the Gospel of our salvation, is to darken the Scriptures, to cloud the apprehension of truth in the minds of men, and to corrupt the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. To that righteousness is the eye of the sinner ever to be directed; on that righteousness, he must, by faith, continually rest; on that righteousness must he live; and in that righteousness must he die; in that righteousness must he appear before the judgment bar; and in that righteousness must he stand for ever rejoicing in the presence of a righteous God."

"But why," you ask, "is this peculiar title given to the work of Christ? Why is His conformity to the law in all its requirements, whether of precept or of penalty,—His obedience to its commands, and His endurance of its curse, designated here, 'the righteousness of God?'" I answer, first, to distinguish it from man's righteousness—from the sinner's fancied righteousness. Every man has some kind of righteousness on which he builds his hopes; that is, every one who believes in a God, in a judgment, and in eternity. Conscience tells us all that we must have some plea to offer at the bar of Divine justice; and I question if ever a man looked death in the face without an inward conviction that if he would meet the God that made him in peace, he must present to Him a righteousness—some kind, at least, of obedience to that law under which God has placed him, a law engraved in such deep characters upon the human heart, that even the most degraded heathen are said to bear its trace and show its work. "Their conscience," says the Apostle, "bearing them witness, and their thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." And hence it is that every man has a righteous-

ness of some kind or other in which he hopes. He feels that he needs one; ay, and he contrives somehow to find one. I have read of a famous infidel who, when dying, had his windows flung open towards heaven, and, looking upwards, exclaimed "I give back this soul into the hands of its Maker unspotted as it came from Him." Wretched delusion of a miserable man! Nevertheless, there was conscience, bearing testimony to a great and momentous truth. Rousseau was miserably deceived in fancying that his soul was righteous; but he felt, and rightly felt, that, going to the bar of God, he needed a righteousness. He felt that the great moral Governor of the universe, having placed him—a rational, a responsible being—under a law, could not fail, when they met, to ask him for His fulfilment of that law. He deluded himself with the imagination that he had fulfilled the law, and that he *was* rendering his soul back to God pure as he received it. There he was wrong; but he was right in deeming this to be his duty, right in believing this to be God's demand. And so it is that every one who thinks of God, who thinks of a judgment-seat, who thinks of a coming eternity, cannot do so without looking out for some righteousness. Some men, casting their eyes anxiously about, perhaps, in times of sickness, when the shadows of death seem to be already stealing over the chamber in which they lie, find their righteousness in their natural dispositions. Oh! they have been kind, and gentle, and ingenuous, and harmless, and generous, and sincere, and with *that* righteousness they will go to the bar of God. Some, again, place their hopes in the fact that they have maintained a character without reproach in the world, and, in their intercourse with their fellow-men, have been just, and sober, and temperate, and liberal, and benevolent; and that is *their* righteousness. Others, again, seek for it in their strict observance of the rites and ceremonies of religion, or in their careful performance of its outward duties. They have been baptized; they have been admitted members of the visible Church of Christ; they pray; they hear the Word; they read the Scriptures; they receive the sacrament; and in some way or other they observe the Sabbath-day; and that is *their* righteousness. Others mainly look to acts of charity, to their good intentions, to the circumstance that they have always meant well—have often felt sorrow when they did wrong; that they have submitted, it may be, to penances, and self-inflicted austerities, and have always attempted to make some compensation for their offences; and that is *their* righteousness. And some, again, console themselves with the belief that they have not been *very* wicked; that they have not been as other men, "extortioners, unjust, adulterers, covetous, ambitious, proud;" and that is *their* righteousness. And others, that they have suffered for their religion, such as it is, have been jeered at, and reproached, and persecuted, for their creed or their profession; and that is *their* righteousness. Perhaps the merits of Christ are called in, to combine with all or any of these, to furnish out the righteousness of others still. And, indeed, the shapes and forms are endless which man's own righteousness assumes. Now, in opposition to all these, God comes forth and says—"Here, in the work of the Lord Jesus, is *my* righteousness." All others are delusions; this is a reality. The one, God's righteousness, is a perfect robe, fit clothing for a prince; the other, man's righteousness, is mere tatters, a very beggar's garb. The one is a robe that not only enwraps, but adorns the soul that wears it; the other "rags," unable to clothe its nakedness—"filthy rags" that pollute, that defile, instead of adorning it. The one, "God's righteousness," is like some strong hiding-place from the wind, like some firm covert from the tempest,—a safe inviolable sanctuary; the other, man's righteousness, an imaginary refuge, an altar to whose horns it is vain to cling, and where God, finding the sinner, will say to justice, as did Solomon of old to Joab, "Go, fall upon him," and slay him there. Man's righteousness—that which the sinner would in vain offer to God as a ransom for his soul; God's righteousness—that alone which God will and can accept for justification of life.

But, secondly, the work of Christ is termed God's righteousness, because it was God

who devised, and provided, and accepted it, as the ground of a sinner's pardon and acceptance and salvation. God devised it; therefore it is His righteousness. He planned it all out in the councils of eternity before the world began. God provided it; and therefore it is His righteousness. When man had cast away and trampled in the dust the righteousness which God gave him in creation, when he stood naked and defenceless before the Lord, a trembling culprit, without even a fig-leaf to cover his guilty and polluted soul, God did not leave him thus. He announced the provision of another covering for him, of a more glorious righteousness still. It was "witnessed by the law and the prophets;" and "when the fulness of the times was come," God fulfilled His ancient promise, and "sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law," to obey that law in the room of man who had broken it, and to endure the penalty in the room of man who had incurred it; and in every step of his arduous way and work God upheld and supported His beloved Son, until upon the cross He could say, "It is finished!"—the righteousness is perfected: and then God put His seal upon it; that is, He solemnly and judicially accepted it; He declared his satisfaction with it; for He raised up Christ from the dead, He glorified his Son Jesus; He declared that the debt was paid for; He set the Surety at liberty; He declared that his work was honourable and glorious—for, as a reward, and in token of his satisfaction, He exalted Him to His right hand in high and heavenly glory, a Prince, a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.

Oh! dear friends, what security is there here for a soul that feels it is without a righteousness, and looks out for such a one as God will approve? What a security to have revealed in the Gospel, God's own righteousness; that which God Himself has provided, accepted, and approved; a righteousness set before him by the very Being with whom he has to do; a grand discharge provided by the great Creditor himself; a plea put into his lips by the righteous Judge of all!

And once more, thirdly, it is called God's righteousness, not only because God devised it, and provided it, and accepted it, but because God himself wrought it out in the person of his co-equal and co-eternal Son. Who is the Lord Jesus Christ? Immanuel, God with us; and this is perhaps the highest ground for the title which is thus given to it of God's righteousness, that God Himself accomplished and wrought it out. It differs, therefore, entirely from the righteousness of men and of angels; for that is the righteousness, not of a creature; it is the righteousness of the Creator. "I, the Lord," says he, "have created it." It is as much the work of God as is the world itself. By His Son, we are told, He made the world; and by His Son He wrought out this righteousness. It is God's, therefore, in this highest, this most mysterious sense, that it was the obedience of One, and the suffering of One, who was God; of One who, having for this very purpose taken upon Himself a created nature and become manifest, visible in the flesh, did in that flesh accomplish this righteousness, a righteousness without a parallel; the only obedience ever rendered to the law on earth, and rendered by God Himself—an obedience strictly Divine; a righteousness at once human and Divine—human in the matter of it, Divine in the Author and the infinite excellence of it; human, inasmuch as it was the true and proper obedience of a man, born of a woman, made under the law; Divine, inasmuch as the man was the very fellow of the Lord of Hosts, the Creator of all worlds, God over all, blessed for ever. "Surely," shall one say, "in Jehovah have I righteousness;" not only from Him, but *in* Him. It is His own work; it is His very work. "This is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness." And thus is the glory of the expression of the text complete, "the righteousness of God." It stands forth the grand central word in Divine revelation. It not only tells us what alone it is that God will accept as the sinner's plea, in opposition to all the inventions of men; but it tells us why this righteousness is so worthy to be accepted for the justification of all that put their trust in it. It is, as the Apostle calls it, "the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Well,

then, may Paul exclaim, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

This is the grand discovery of the Gospel. Where else is this discovery of a Divine righteousness to be found? Human philosophy never dreamed of it; human reason never approached it. Some dim conceptions of the Divine mercy have been formed by the human mind, but Divine righteousness,—God's own obedience to the law, that on account of it sinners might be forgiven,—this it never entered into the heart of man to conceive. It is therefore pre-eminently a righteousness "revealed;" and it is the glory of the Gospel that it reveals it; that it manifests it, and fully discloses it. It was the glory of Columbus that, with daring genius, he pierced the night of ages and disclosed to his wondering followers another world. It was the glory of Newton that, with sagacious and philosophic mind, he penetrated the secrets of the heavens, unlocked the cabinet in which lay hid the greatest of nature's laws, and laid open those forces which at once rule the motions of the spheres and bind into one harmonious family the remotest stars that spangle the nightly sky. But oh! what were such disclosures in comparison with that which the Gospel makes, when it "reveals the righteousness of God," a righteousness that opens to our lost and ruined race a new and better world than earth contains, a happier existence than earth e'er knew—a righteousness that sheds around the Christian, not the glories of the starry firmament that shall one day pale its fires and depart as a scroll, but the light and blessedness of heaven itself, immortal as the soul of man, eternal as the throne of God! Well did the Apostle say, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

And this, while it constitutes the glory of the Gospel, imparts to it its divine, its saving power. And why? Because the law of God, infinitely dishonoured by sin, this righteousness infinitely magnifies. Because the law of God, denouncing death upon transgressors, this righteousness completely satisfies. For man's rebellion, it offers to that law divine obedience; for man's unholy life, it offers to that law Christ life, wondrously holy, divinely pure. It thus removes every obstacle interposed by justice and the law out of the way of man's salvation, and opens up a channel, deep and broad, down which, forth from the fountain, full and overflowing, of the Godhead, might roll into our guilty world a tide of Divine benevolence and saving mercy. And only let a man become possessed of this righteousness, only let a man be able in very truth to say, "This Divine righteousness is mine; it is the robe in which my soul is arrayed, it is my plea for pardon, for acceptance, for eternal life,"—I say, only let a man become possessed of that righteousness, and the Gospel will prove itself to be to him "the power of God unto salvation." He shall be pardoned, and accepted, and receive a title to eternal life.

Do you ask, How you can obtain it? In what way you can become possessed of it? I answer, no price on earth can purchase it; "the merchandize thereof is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold." It is "without money," it is "without price." It is the free, the unmerited gift of God. It is offered to you, each one of you, in the Gospel of God's Son. It is urged upon your acceptance in its

earnest invitations and calls. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him." "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and whosoever will, let him take it." "I will bring it." "Hearken unto me, ye that are stout-hearted and far from righteousness," says God; "I bring near my righteousness." He lays it before you; he lays it at your feet; ay, and you cannot pass from this house this right without trampling it under foot, unless you accept it.

"How," say you, "are we to accept it? It is faith that accepts it. This righteousness is said to be revealed to faith. It is faith that receives it. It is 'unto all and upon all them that believe.' What are we to believe?" Believe that you are guilty, undone, condemned, and lost. Receive in yourselves, within your own consciences, the sentence of death, as having broken, ten thousand times over, the law. Believe that you have no righteousness of your own to plead in arrest of judgment, and that you are already unable to work out any such righteousness as the law demands. Waste, then, no more time in *that* attempt. Renounce all hope and expectation from *that* quarter. Believe that God Himself has, in Divine compassion and in wondrous love, provided for you such a righteousness as you need—ordained and appointed His own Son to perform it—set Him forth as a propitiation, that He might accomplish it—accepted it when performed, now honestly and earnestly makes you an offer of it, and is ready, if you will but accept it, to lay it to your account, to deal with you, because of it, just as though it were your work. "He hath made Christ to be sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." He has dealt with Christ as if He had been the sinner—(let the cross of Calvary be the proof)—that He might deal with you as if you were the righteous, the worker of righteousness—"that you might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Believe *that*, and fall in with God's gracious design, and with thankful heart accept His gift. Cast yourself upon Christ. Take Him as your Saviour. Venture on His righteousness for salvation; rely upon it; make it your only trust, your habitual plea; feel convinced that you must perish if it does not save you, but equally convinced that, in relying on it, you cannot perish, for it *will* save you.

And make no delay. There is neither time nor need for delay. Time is precious; come as you are. Were you summoned, indeed, into the royal presence, you would change your garment; you would cast off your working dress; you would wash away the marks of dusty toil, and you would put on your best; but here you have no need to change a rag, nor to wipe away a stain. God is ready to receive you as you are; come, therefore, as you are. He has provided for you, at a great price, a costly garment—a robe of righteousness—arrayed in which you will be glorious in the sight of angels, and glorious in the sight of God Himself. Why should you hang back? Why not this night accept and put it on? Great will be your deliverance: for "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." And great will be your peace, for this will be the commencement of a trust that will establish your heart in comfort, and the commencement of a grateful affection that will establish your heart in the love and in the habit of holiness. Are any of you, in your secret souls, resolving to continue yet a little longer as you are, and to delay the consideration of God's offer thus made to you till "a more convenient season?" Oh! remember, dear friends, that the importance of this offer

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

and the majesty of the God from whom it comes brook no delay. I have read in ancient history of the ambassador of a Roman power who was sent to a hostile prince to make known to him the terms upon which peace might be procured. The warlike monarch, having listened to terms, demanded some time for the consideration of a matter so weighty. When this was refused, he named a shorter period. That also was denied. He then asked that he might at least retire and consult with his chief and chosen men of state; upon which the ambassador took his rod, and drawing a circle in the sand around the place on which the monarch stood, exclaimed, "Before you overstep this bound, peace or war must be your choice." Dear friends, in God's name I put within your reach this night God's righteousness, and I draw around you that circle, and I conjure you, in God's name, not to overpass it without accepting God's offer,—ay, before you quit this house, to lay hold of God's righteousness. "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation."

Exeter Hall Sermons.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF HAVELOCK.

A SECOND FUNERAL SERMON TO GENERAL HAVELOCK*.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 14, 1858,

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM BROCK.

"He being dead yet speaketh."—HEBREWS xi. 4.

So humble a man was Havelock, that at the honour which his countrymen are doing him, I believe he would have been surprised, and only one consideration would have reconciled him to the present popular and eulogistic mention of his name. If by presenting his example before the public, his admirers can accomplish any good, then, we are sure, he would have acquiesced. If the narration of his history, or the mention of his habits, can be made subservient to the formation of sound character, and to the maintenance of upright conduct in other men, then we know he would have been content,—but not else. Ostentatiousness he abhorred; vain-glory was odious to him. To flattery he was insensible, and of himself he never cared to speak. Our reverence, therefore, for his memory constrains us to learn the lessons, or to seek to learn them, which are taught by his eventful life. It would be a reflection on his name, and a practical dishonour to his reputation, to let these lessons go unlearned. Being dead and buried he speaks to us; and from that distant grave in the Alumbagh there comes his voice, reminding us of duties which we are sadly prone to neglect, and of privileges which we are very apt to forego. Let us, then, my brethren, give heed to that which he says to us to-night, reckoning that he has a claim upon our attention, inasmuch as so signally he showed his faith by his works. Being dead, then, he speaketh to us.

He says, for one thing, that, whatever a man's secular activities, he ought habitually to fear God,—that is one of the lessons. Nothing is more common than the plea of absolute absorption in business, when the claims of religion are brought forward and enforced. It is not denied that it would be a right thing to give time to Bible reading every day. Nothing would be more suitable, it is admitted, than the allotment of a portion of one hour for private worship, and of another hour for family worship. To begin, and continue, and end every day in the grateful remembrance of our Father who is in heaven, would be simply and always right. The preacher may take his case for granted, that of Him "in whom we live, and move, and have our being," it becometh every man to be mindful; and that only as we are mindful of Him can it be well with any man living in the long run. But, then, these incessant occupations so engross us, this draft and demand upon our

* Taken in shorthand by Messrs. Reed, Robeson, and Woodward, 6, Southampton-buildings, Chancery-lane.

time, and upon our energy day after day, leave us no opportunity for religious action, or religious thought. Give us more leisure, and we will pay attention to our devotion with all our heart. Let us have less of this inevitable publicity, and instead of it, some goodly measure of quietness and peace, and we will be Bible readers and worshippers, and observers of religious ordinances, to the very end of our day. As things are, we must be excused. We cannot be late at chambers. We must be at our office, and we must go for the important business of that office well prepared. We have undertaken to conduct that department of our concern on which every thing depends. We have the entire weight of the young business we have just established entirely resting upon ourselves. We work for a master who has no mercy upon us, who begrudges us almost the time which is absolutely necessary for our food and sleep; we are on drill, or parade, or march continually; we can call no hour of the day our own. No; godliness is confessedly necessary, but then it is impracticable—we have not the time.

Now, what saith the man whom we all admire? Instantly will you grant to me that your secular engagements are not more absorbing than his were. Through the whole portion of his manhood he was out prominently before the world, having a good deal more than the ordinary share of harass, and turmoil, and responsibility. There were times, no doubt, when he was comparatively at rest. But, very often, for months together he had scarcely any rest at all—his condition in Afghanistan and Oude, to wit. The condition, however, was virtually immaterial. His first duty every where was to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. That must be attended to, of course. To nothing, whatever, could religious duties be either subordinated or postponed; it was, indeed, being always performed, as the habit of his life. He was not, any more than you and I need to be, he was not all day long at his Bible; but he was found invariably pondering some portion of it every day. He was not continually in the outward act of prayer; but he took good care, somehow or other, to be alone with his Maker at some time or other during the day. He was not constantly at church or chapel; but he was there on the Lord's day, and not unfrequently on other days besides. If for these engagements he could not find time, he just made the time. And when so pressed, as he was at Jellahabad, he got his comrades, who were likeminded with himself, together every night, that they might join in worshipping, and in commending themselves to God. And when, in his heaviest marches, it was determined to start at some earlier hour than that which had been allotted to his devotions, he arose quite in time to have his usual fellowship with God undisturbed. He lived and he died, declaring, "Where there is a will there is a way." What he has done may be done again. There were no resources available by him which are not available by every other man. No obligations devolved upon him that are not devolved upon every other man. And there were no purposes formed by him that ought not to be formed by every other man. "Go," saith Havelock, as you are contemplating his religiousness, sustained by his daily communion with God, and consisting in that communion with God, "go, and do likewise. When you plead the anxieties of your warehouse, remember the anxieties of my tent. When you plead the distractions of your business, remember the distractions of my profession. When you vindicate your irreligioness, by urging the pressure of your occupations morning, noon, and night, remember the pressure of my occupations at Ghaznee and Lucknow. Through God's grace, I could live godly in Christ Jesus, all difficulties notwithstanding. Through God's grace, if you will try, you will be enabled to do just the same." "Being dead, he yet speaketh."

That is one of the lessons which he thus declares. "Though dead he speaketh." And he says, that whatever a man's unavoidable business from home, he ought assiduously to cherish affectionate attachment for those who constitute his home. It is a peculiarity of the times in which we live that the husband and the father is found very often away from the domestic circle; more a good deal than formerly our households are broken up or dispersed. Business necessitates this; travel occasions it; the manifold means of locomotion encourage it. Hence arises danger. Men may let the conjugal and parental ties gradually loosen until they have lost all their power. Away from those whom they ought to love, and meeting with those whom they ought not to love, there may be serious—virtual violations at least of solemn vows. Resist the temptation is the demand, not of religion only, but of common honour and of self-interest as well. "It is a terrible ordeal," is the reply; "I could resist it if I were in the midst of the salutary associations of a virtuous home; but how can any man resist here?"

Now, what saith he whom we all admire? It was his lot to be separated for a long time together from his wife and children. A sense of duty left him no alternative.

Circumstances necessitated their absence one from another. But mutual attachment was cultivated with the most congenial assiduity. The interchange of sympathy between Bombay and Bohn was uninterrupted. The father in his solitariness on the Ganges or the Jumna, and the mother with her children on the Rhine, maintained a right sacred fellowship of heart and soul. Letters by almost every mail were both the evidence of well sustained affection and the generous aliment by which the affection was increased. No matter how heavy the pressure of his occupations, at one time or other, or how agreeable his relaxation, at another time, Havelock must keep up his correspondence with home. None so dear to him on earth as its precious inmates. Nothing in his esteem comparable with the honest reciprocation of their irrepressible and their yearning love. He lived and he died, evincing the imperativeness and the possibility of maintaining the conjugal and the parental responsibilities untarnished and intact. What has been done may be done again. A sense of the Divine presence may be carefully cherished; the pledges which have been given may be borne gratefully in mind; the assurances which are repeated by every mail of inviolable devotion may be responded to accordingly. To the children messages may be sent through the mother; and at other times pleasant letters may be forwarded to the children themselves. And this will do wonders in keeping any man right, both in heart and in conduct too. "Go," saith Havelock, as you are contemplating his virtuous and honourable married life, "go and do likewise. Repel the intrusion of the wrong by pre-occupying your sensibilities with the right. Preclude the operation of the evil by surcharging your sympathies with the good. Turn off your eyes from beholding vanity, by keeping ever before you the images of darling children, fondly listening as they are told about their absent father by your real-hearted, loving wife. Through God's grace I resisted somewhat violent temptation; so, if you trust in that grace, you will be enabled to resist it, too. "He being dead yet speaketh." And this is another of the lessons which he declares.

He speaks, and he says that whatever a man's virtues, he ought to trust for his salvation exclusively to Christ. Men resent the imputation that their good works are unavailing for their acceptance with God. To expect them to acknowledge that they are exposed to everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, is, they say, unreasonable. To affirm that whatever they really may need, in order to forgiveness, they cannot themselves supply it, is fanatical and absurd. Are they not upright and truth-telling? Have they not won the good opinion of all who are around them? Is it not well-nigh proverbial, through the circle of their acquaintance, that if you want kindness or co-operation, you must needs apply to them? There is no denying this. Then why deal with them as though they were guilty before God? They demur to the imputation altogether. Virtuous and reputable as they are, God will never condemn them.

What saith the man whom we all admire? That he was virtuous and reputable is beyond doubt. To a long and most eventful life the reference may be made in confirmation. He was patriotic; he was unselfish; he was forgiving; he was voracious; he was temperate; he was pious. Not many of us should be found to surpass him, if investigation were to be made into our duties towards God or man; and by a large majority, both in England and in India, should we by the comparison be found to fall manifestly short. He was a sound-minded, right-hearted, and a good living man; but he held himself to be personally unworthy of the Divine mercy. By his reading of Holy Scripture, he "concluded" himself "under sin." Give him that which he had merited, and he must perish; but that would not be given him, if so be he would believe in Christ as the sacrifice and propitiation for sin; there would be no condemnation then, but rather justification unto everlasting life. He did believe in Christ; he received the atonement; he submitted himself to the righteousness of God, and, with a grateful heart, he closed with the proffers of free grace. No obstacle intervening, he was at once delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; he was accepted in the Beloved; his sins were forgiven him; he became complete in Christ. What has been done may be done again. Consciousness of one's need of salvation may be induced on the one hand, and there may be full assurance induced on the other, of the provision of salvation that has been made by Christ. Reflection upon our own unworthiness will lead us to feel that we are sinners; examination of our Bibles will convince us that Christ came down from heaven that he might save us. The means of which the departed general made such use, are all within our reach; the means for rejoicing in Christ Jesus whilst we have no confidence in the flesh. "Go," saith Havelock, as you are contemplating his quiet confidence in the intercession of our great High Priest, "go and do likewise." Put no trust in your virtues; for what, after all, do

they come to at their best estate? Have done with all your reliance for acceptance with God upon loyalty, or patriotism, or philanthropy, or anything besides. Be the good citizen by all means; be the loyal subject; be the good father, and the good neighbour, and the faithful husband; but along with all that be the broken-hearted and penitent sinner before the footstool of the Divine mercy. Humble yourselves there, for you cannot regenerate your own hearts; you cannot expiate your own transgressions; you cannot merit everlasting life. You may take it as God's free gift: through His grace I went and took it; you imitate my example; and, through God's grace, you shall take it and receive it likewise. "By grace are we saved through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." "He being dead, yet speaketh;" and he bids you not to go about to establish your own righteousness, but to submit yourselves to the righteousness of God. Another of the lessons which from that grave in the Alumbagh he speaks and declares to us now.

He speaks, and he says, that whatever a man's liabilities to persecution, he ought to abide resolutely by his convictions of what is right. It must be granted that our times are better than the former times in respect to freedom from pains and penalties for conscience sake. The rack and the dungeon are obsolete. Of the spoiling of our goods there is not much danger. Without any apparent exception, it may be supposed that we are all sitting under our vines and fig-trees, "none making us afraid." Yet there are exceptions, more, we apprehend, than sometimes is known. If a man will dare to act upon the dictates of his conscience, as seeing God, who is invisible, he may have to bear cold and withering indifference where he has hitherto basked amidst the kindest respect—he may have to suffer the loss of friendships which he has greatly prized—he may have witholden or withdrawn from him important and invaluable patronage—he may be grossly misrepresented or misconstrued—he may have his good name insidiously calumniated, and his reputation, for the time being, practically undermined. Satire and sarcasm will assail him; the broad laugh will ridicule him; the shameful innuendo will endanger him; the audacious exaggeration will entail upon him popular condemnation; the well-framed and well-told lie will bring him into miserable dispute. Very well is this kind of jeopardy understood; and by the dread of encountering it, many are kept aloof from obeying the will of God. Why should they expose themselves to the opprobrium? why should they incur the risk? why should they endure the harm and loss? To any enquiries about the actual propriety of a given course, they would answer, that it is indisputable. They raise no question at all about the requirements of the Holy Scripture in that direction; to do that particular thing would be right, beyond any doubt; but they cannot afford to be singular; they must shrink, and they do shrink, from being ranked and reckoned among the saints.

Now, what saith the man whom we admire, my brethren? No secret was it to him that, if he confessed Christ before men, he should have, in one form or another, persecution. Would he, under his circumstances, conceal his evangelical principles, and imitate Joseph of Arimethea, who was "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews?" He revolved that question thoughtfully and prayerfully in his mind, and presently he was ready with his reply; He dared not to act clandestinely. He was not his own to do with himself just what was grateful to him at the moment. He was under paramount obligation to Christ. Show him what he meant to do was wrong, and he would instantly leave it undone. Make it evident that it was at least doubtful or premature, and he would postpone it until it could be reconsidered and ascertained. But once admit that the course which he projected was in itself prescribed by the grace and providence of God, and an objector might hold his peace. "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, I cannot go back." The satirist might sting, and the sarcastic might accumulate and exasperate contempt; and misrepresentation might go about to account for his peculiarities, by saying that they were eccentricity rather than principle, caprice rather than deliberation, obstinacy rather than conscientiousness, a deeper form of worldly policy rather than spirituality of mind; and timidity might forbode unpleasant consequences from misrepresentation; and expediency might gravely recommend that he should be somewhat careful about the main chance. But it was all in vain; all the opposition availed nothing. He was not ambitious of singularity; but he was bent upon obeying Christ. He was not reckless about the good opinion of his comrades, for he always valued that, and did that which was likely to bring him their approval; but what he valued most was, the approbation that cometh down from above. He was perfectly aware that he might be wrong—mistaken; but he exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man. What has been done may be done again. Purposes may be formed of just the same kind. A stand may be made against flatteries,

and against frowns with exactly similar success. Slander may be silenced; scornfulness may be lived down; opposition may be conciliated; and the proof may come out, even illustriously, that "Him who honoureth God, God will honour." "Go," saith Havelock, as you are contemplating his inflexible adherence to his conviction, "go and do likewise." Tell the employer, who bids you defraud or falsify, that you must refuse his bidding. Tell the counsellor who, New Testament in hand, professes to have a case that you cannot solve, and who then goes and quotes the apostolic statement about being "all things to all men," tell that counsellor you must have something better than a mis-quotation. And tell the men of this time-serving, money-grasping, luxurious, generation, that, politic or impolitic, competency or no competency, through evil report or good report, your mind is bent upon doing just the right and straightforward thing, "not as pleasing men, but God who trieth the hearts." Through God's grace (he tells us) I was enabled to outbrave and outlive the opposition; through God's grace you will be enabled to do the same thing: "Being dead he yet speaketh."

And this is another of the lessons we are called to learn.

He speaks, and he says that whatever a man's professional calling, he ought to aim evangelically at doing good. The tendency to devolve the work of religious teaching upon a certain class of men, exclusively, is by no means extinct. Not so powerful in action as it was once, the tendency is, nevertheless, in action; and private Christians, as they are designated, are told, and they take the telling and act upon it, that it is not for them, but for the ministers of their several churches, according to their several grades. Now, they have all their work to do before God, beyond all doubt; but the brotherhood at large are required to become their co-adjutors. Every Christian is under obligation to show himself a fellow-helper to the truth. No need has he of ordination at the hands of his fellow-men. No commission need he to seek, ere he dare to tell his neighbour how he may be delivered from the wrath to come. His knowledge of the way to heaven is his warrant for proclaiming the way to all who are within his reach. Because he has found mercy of the Lord himself, he is even under obligation to make known that mercy wherever his influence can extend. Is there doubt as to the obligation? Are objections occurring against the propriety of any person's declaring the good tidings of great joy, unless he himself has been specially appointed to the work?

What saith the man whom we are admiring? Most sincerely did he esteem all faithful ministers of Christ. Upon the services which they conducted, he was a constant attendant whenever he had the opportunity. Of their preaching, he invariably took advantage, and recommended his men to do the same. For a stated and a settled ministry, both of the word and the ordinances of the Gospel, he evinced the highest possible respect. In no degree would he heedlessly infringe upon what he always held to be an institution of the head of the Church. At the same time, when those around him were perishing for lack of knowledge, and there were none to interfere on their behalf, he felt that he must interfere himself; the duty of doing good, and communicating was remembered by him; the injunction to love his neighbour as himself was apprehended by him; the fact that, in the apostolic times, there were men who went and preached the Gospel every where, who had not been specially set apart for that purpose just then,—all that told upon his mind, and it produced this, as the result, that he would go and imitate their example himself. He could expound to the inquirer the meaning of Christ's gracious invitations. Who could not do that, who has experimentally appropriated the truth which they contain? He could warn and admonish, and entreat the men who were heedless and careless about the great salvation, and God helping him, he knew that it would be done with success. And, let me say, that in labours of that kind, he wrought carefully, not giving his men what had cost him nothing but in almost every case of which one has had special mention, by those who know the matter well, preparing to bring forth out of God's Word, things both new and old, that he might all the more successfully commend himself by the manifestation of the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God. What has been done, may be done again. Servants of a household may be accosted, either individually, or when they are gathering for household worship. Groups, who in leisure times may be found at the corners of our streets, and on our own village greens, may be spoken to about the salvation of their souls. The multitude, larger or smaller, ever ready to reply to a frank invitation, and who will come to almost any place where you ask them to come, may be told how Christ loved them, and gave himself for them. And in such a way may this be done, that they shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. "Go," saith Havelock, as you are contemplating his evangelical services at the temple at Rangoon, and at Jellahabad, "Go and do likewise. Never

be ashamed of Christ. If you believe that your neighbours, that your servants, that your companions, that your children, unconverted, are in danger of God's displeasure, take care that they be told it; and if you believe that they need not stay in that condition another hour, God's awaiting Holy Spirit is ready to make them new creatures in Christ Jesus, take care to let them know that. Break with the selfishness that has hitherto withholden you; renounce the indolence that has hitherto hindered you; correct the mistake that has hitherto been misleading you; and be the patriarch in your own household. Be the spiritual benefactors to your own tenantry; and let the men in your employ, whether in the manufactory, or the warehouse, or the shop, let them all know how they may be saved, even by the exercise of their own faith in the precious blood of Christ. Through God's grace," saith he, "I was enabled to exhort and to warn, and to encourage, even so that many were converted from the error of their ways. So, by God's grace, if you trust it, will you be enabled to do just the same. "Being dead, he yet speaketh,"

And that is another of the lessons we are required to learn.

He speaks, and he says, that whatever a man's ecclesiastical or theological preferences, he ought to show brotherly regard for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Differences of judgment about various matters of religious interest are, we presume, under our circumstances inevitable, inasmuch as every Christian is to be "fully persuaded in his own mind." The right of private judgment having been accorded to him, and the duty of private judgment having been devolved upon him—would to God those two things were not separated, as they often are!—many a man will talk about the *right* of private judgment, who never thinks about the *duty* of private judgment;—the one having been accorded to us, and the other devolved upon us, diversities of opinion may be looked for throughout the church. Minds have been differently constituted, are differently educated, and are found situated differently in relation to the truth; so that, uniformity is not to be anticipated by us yet. Faithfulness to our convictions forbids the expectation; loyalty to our one Master renders it impossible. I dare not believe what another man believes about the article of a creed; I dare not adopt what another man adopts as to the injunctions of a ritual; only just so far as the ritual and creed in my belief accord with the word of God; and the man dares not act as I act, nor believe as I believe, except upon these very self same terms. Then, must we separate? Have we no option, my brethren, but to keep aloof from one another? Is it incumbent on us to make our peculiarities the standard, by agreement with which our neighbour's Christianity is to be admitted, or, by disagreement with which that Christianity is to be denied? Have we no alternative but to ignore all points of doctrine and practice in which we are united, and to concentrate and exhaust, and employ all our sympathies upon those about which we differ? What saith the man whom we admire? No doubt was there about his peculiarities, ecclesiastical or theological. His correspondence, his communications, his conduct generally, make that plain, transparently. It was not his habit to make light of any portion of his Lord's discovered will. No idea had he of seeming to believe what he actually disbelieved, and of appearing to abandon what he devoutly held fast as the truth of God. All approach to the foolish, sentimental, fashionable indifference on religious subjects was instinctively avoided; latitudinarianism in every aspect of it he held in utter disrepute; but in equal disrepute did he hold all sectarianism. Who might rely upon his co-operation in aggressions upon the world's wickedness and the world's woe? Every Christian body under heaven. Who might be sure that if they sent for him, if it were possible he would come and pour the oil of consolation into broken hearts? Every Christian family and every Christian man throughout the earth. And who might depend upon his generosity, and implicitly leave themselves in his hands, if, in their absence, the good name of their Christian body, or their personal good name, was impugned and calumniated? There was not a Christian body in the world (whether so illustrious as to be envied, or so insignificant as to be despised) who would not have found in him, at any moment, a man who would, fraternally and right congenially, have undertaken their defence. And who might depend upon seeing him at the celebration of the Lord's supper, wherever, in God's providence, for the time being he might be located? Any Church of any name that would let him come might be sure that there he would be found, showing forth the Lord's death until he return again. Then, was there no limit to his fellowship? None. Was there no restriction put upon the outgoings of his affectionate, and spiritual, and evangelical regard? None, whatsoever. His doctrine was just that which I have declared, that all who loved our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity were his brethren and his friends. What has been done, may be done again, my brethren. No unavoidable necessity rests upon us to be either recreant to our own convictions, or intolerant of the convictions of others. We are not reduced to the sad and

miserable alternative either of being a bigot or a latitudinarian. Perfectly compatible his reverence for the dictates of our own conscience, with profound respect for the conscience of every other member of the household of faith. "Go," saith Havelock, as you are contemplating his large-hearted Christian charity, "go and do likewise. Give way to the warmer impulses of a regenerated nature, and recollect that there is a logic of the heart, which, in nine cases out of ten, is the soundest and most trustworthy of all; and wherever the impulse of your regenerated heart leads you to go, in sympathy, in co-operation, or communion, trust your heart and go; and God will go with you, to make you understand, by his fellowship with you, that you are right. Read the Apostolic injunction to receive one another, even as God hath received you all alike. Speak the truth, whatever the appearance of the truth may be to yourselves; but evermore speak the truth in love. Through God's grace I was enabled to be valiant for the truth upon earth, whilst I endeavoured to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Through God's grace, if you will try, you will be enabled to do the same." Being dead he yet speaketh.

And that is another lesson for us to learn to-night.

Havelock speaks, and he says, that whatever a man's maturity of Christian experience, he ought to continue diligently faithful even unto death. Strong consolation is provided for all who are united to the Saviour; promises exceeding great and precious have been given to them. Of unalterable love and inalienable sympathy are they assured from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. One are they with Him who sitteth upon the throne. Because He lives, they may live also; so that there is no room for despondency. Evermore are they authorized to rejoice. There is, however, amplest room for vigilance, and frequent self-examination, and constant prayer: The direction of the Holy Scripture is, to "give all diligence to make our calling and election sure." The decision of the oracles of God is, that "he who endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." Does this seem unnecessary to any of us? Have such advances been made in Christian knowledge, and have such enjoyments been had of the Divine presence, that solicitude and watchfulness, we think, may now be safely relaxed?

What saith the man whom we admire? Firm was his belief in the inalienable security of the saints of God. Like an anchor to his soul, both sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the veil and grasping the everlasting throne, was the persuasion that no child of God will ever perish. With those glorious interrogatory affirmations of the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans he has cheered many a weary hour within his tent,—aye, and many a weary hour when he had no tent to rest in: and, often and again, has he stirred up his mind by way of remembrance that God was faithful who had promised all that. Albeit, he was a most watchful man, and a most prayerful man. That every genuine Christian would be kept by the power of God, "through faith unto salvation," he knew; but then he knew, besides, that every genuine Christian would keep himself in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto everlasting life. Beyond all fair question was the guarantee of perseverance on God's part; beyond all fair question was the duty of perseverance on man's part. Hence, his patient continuance in well-doing. Hence, his communion with his heart in perpetuity. Hence, his never reckoning—and oh, how his letters show us that!—never reckoning that he had "attained," "pressing towards the mark for the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" living hour after hour, and moment after moment, as he began to live at first—a life of faith upon the Son of God. He was diligent that he might be found of his Lord in peace. There was none of "the fear which hath torment;" but there was a good deal of the fear which hath solicitude. There was no cause for apprehending that God would forget him; there was some cause for apprehending that he might, in a moment of temptation, forget God. He would, therefore, "work out his salvation with fear and trembling, God working in him to will and to do of his good pleasure." What has been done, my brethren, may be done again. Presumption and despondency may be alike avoided. We may enjoy our completeness in Christ without betraying our allegiance to Christ. We may triumphantly anticipate our inheritance with the saints in light, without becoming morally unfitted to enter upon that inheritance. We may hold in grateful recollection our experience of the marvellous loving-kindness in the past, without making that experience an excuse for insubordination and alienation from God now.

"Go," saith Havelock, as we are contemplating that most peaceful death, "go," saith he, "and do likewise. I felt the necessity to be imperative on me to run with patience the race that was set before me. I could not do without making my calling and election sure. Day after day, I have been constrained to continue in the grace of God, to hold fast the profession of my faith, to cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart; but, now that I 'pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for his rod and his

staff, they comfort me.' Through God's grace, 'I have fought the good fight, and have finished my course: I have kept the faith.' Through God's grace, if you will but trust it, you assembled ones in Exeter Hall, through God's grace, you will be enabled to do the same; and, when you come to die, it will be for you, as it is for myself, to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.'

Brethren, one illustrious soldier reminds me of another; there are two of them. Oh! how I might speak, not of the one to whom I am most feebly and faintly referring; but how I might speak of Havelock's companions in India; men of like precious faith with himself, men, some of whom are gone, and thank God, some of them remaining the hope of our country: I trow, there, the men whom we may look to, and for the continuance of whose life I pray to God every day. I might refer to them, but it was not to them I did refer in my mind at the moment. There were two of them, I was saying; see the one. He died. "Come," saith he (and it is told us that he said it with great earnestness), "Come, and make it plain to me, now, that a man once in a state of grace can never fall from grace; for if you make that plain to me I die contented, but not else." See the other. He is dying. "Come," saith he, "and see how a Christian man can die. I have for forty years so ruled my life that when death came I might not be afraid to face him. Thank God for my hope in Christ, we shall meet in heaven." Who dies like that? Who is tranquil, not terrified; expectant, not desolate; confident, not doubtful; joyous, not sad? The men who rule their lives for forty years, or any number of years that they may be living on God's earth, as he did; the men who live the life which they live in the flesh, lives of faith upon the Son of God; to them the abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be accorded; and instead of being saved "so as by fire," and before we can say they are gone, they have gone in the full assurance of a well-sustained and well-warranted faith, and singing amidst the freshness of their new immortality, "Thanks be to God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." See how a Christian man can die. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

But "being dead." That is the point, "being dead." We have lost him. The country mourns the loss, not of him only, let me say again, but of men of equal excellence with him both professionally and religiously. He is gone! The nation mourns his loss. The other nations of the earth sympathize with us: witness the lowering of the colours half-mast the other day in two of the ports of the United States. Instinctively, as soon as ever the death of Havelock was announced, down came, or up went, the colours half-mast high; and I take that as a symbol of what the nations of the earth are thinking, in their sympathy and their fellowship with us, about this loss. "Commemorate the man!" is the universal cry. Perpetuate the record of his excellencies; hand down to your children, and be sure to tell them to hand down to their children after them, the mention of his fame. Let the most magnificent site in Europe be graced with the monumental column, and let the noblest abbey in the Empire be adorned with the eulogistic marble. The country will have him honoured; India demands the celebration of his deeds; the world must know that we hold him in renown. Be it so. Your generous sympathy with the government in all that it has done, and, then, your generous personal contributions to that which will presently be proposed, by all means. But I, as a minister of Christ, implore one thing first of all, and that is this:—go and follow him as far as ever he followed Christ. Take the lessons about faithfulness unto death, about Christian catholicity, about adherence to principle, about evangelical zeal in regard to others, about fidelity to conjugal and parental responsibilities, and about a godly life in Christ Jesus;—take all these lessons and learn them. Whether ye be statesmen, or magistrates, or soldiers, or lawyers, or physicians, or merchants, or yeomen, or artisans, or domestic servants, go, all of you, bring out in the living characters of a God-fearing life, henceforward the indelible eulogy, "Sacred to the memory of Havelock!" Your granite and your marble will be unavailing in some time that is to come: *that* will always tell; for it will tell on even to eternity. Your sculptured inscription will become illegible; the inscription that I shall ask for will be always legible. You will be doing honour to the man in a way that your Saviour will congenially approve, and you will identify your lives with that name, so that, by-and-bye, you, and he, and all of us, and every other faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be found by the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. Oh, to have the blessedness of that gathering with him enhanced by the recollection, that the presentation of the lessons taught to us by his life and his death, has, under God's Holy Spirit, been the means of delivering you from the power of darkness, and of translating you into the kingdom of his dear Son. "He being dead yet speaketh."

Exeter Hall Sermons.

COUNTING THE COST.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 17, 1858,

BY THE

REV. G. B. MACDONALD,

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish."—
LUKE xiv. 28—30.

THE spiritual application of my text is so exceedingly plain, that I need scarcely allude to it. Assuming it to be a revealed doctrine and an admitted fact that we have all sinned, and that the wages of sin is death, and that death, the second death, then, on the supposition that it is possible for sin to be pardoned, and for a sinner to obtain a title and a meetness for heaven, does the work of salvation stand out before us as the one great business of life. Compared with this, the pursuit after wealth, and honours, and even learning itself, is the merest child's play. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" The nature and extent of Scripture obligations are very clearly stated to us in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour. Jesus Christ concealed none of his requirements; He took advantage of no man's ignorance, nor of moments of temporary excitement. Let the connexion of my text be an evidence. Our Lord had delivered the parable of the great supper to which the guests invited refused to come. Indignant at their conduct, the master of the feast sent forth his servants into the streets and lanes to gather all they could find, and bring them in to the feast. Finding there was still room, he sent out a second commission of servants into the highways and hedges, to bring in the maimed, and the lame, and the halt, and the blind, that the room might be filled. The common people, true to the instincts which belong to their order, at once apprehended the force of our Lord's parable, and they drew nearer and nearer to him, while one by one the Pharisees and Sadducees shrank away. The result was, that great multitudes followed our Lord. He turned and said unto them, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." I may just remark, the word hate there simply signifies to "love less;" as in another passage, "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other." And then our Lord exclaimed, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." My text is addressed to these men following him under the influence of such strong excitement, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish."

I have said that, on the admission, as a fact, that we are all sinners, and that the consequences of sin are most terrible, then the salvation of the soul is really the one great business of life. I propose now to examine that subject through the illustrative medium which my text supplies.

The Word of God, soberly and plainly interpreted, is the only authority which we can admit upon a question like this. A revelation has been given by God to man for this prime reason, that by searching man could not find out God, and ignorance of God is necessarily connected with unacquaintance with his will and law. Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel; but remember, the same volume which teaches us that the soul shall never die, and that there is a heaven of pure and unmixed happiness, declares in language not to be misunderstood, that certain requirements must be complied with on man's part and a certain preparation be wrought in him, if he finally partake in the enjoyments of the immortal blessed. Call they us enthusiasts, because, bowing down, to the authority of God's Word we are seeking to be made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light?" Of all enthusiasts in this world of ours, of all fanatics, they are the most intense, who expect to obtain a given end without the use of the appointed means, to take possession of an estate without any title to it; and such precisely are the men who living forgetful of God and his laws, yet indulge a hope that after death they shall enter heaven.

My brethren, the Scriptures point out to us the only way to heaven. No improvement of modern times will ever alter the road to it. It was, and it is, and it will be a narrow way. You may shorten the distance between town and town; you may expedite the speed of your conveyances, till you measure miles of transit by the seconds of your watch; you may seem scarcely to be uttering a metaphor, when you speak of riding on the wings of the wind; but a shorter, a quicker, a safer, a better way to heaven than that our sainted fathers went, there is no man living of us will ever find out.

In calculating the expense of a building, there are two things which every prudent man takes into account. He has his specifications and his estimates before him; and he, first of all, calculates what that building must, at all events, cost him—that amount at less than which it is utterly impossible, under any circumstances, that he can get the work accomplished for. But I have supposed the builder to be a prudent man, and, if so, he has learned something from the experience of his neighbours. They will tell him of the prudence of leaving a margin for extras, for contingencies—that it would be well to look such in the face at the very outset, and thus make his calculations, whether or not he is prepared to undertake the building. Now, I propose this evening to adopt just the same plain, common-sense, business-like mode of looking at this great subject,—the work of our personal salvation.

First of all, what that work *must cost a man*,—the amount at less than which it is utterly impossible that he can realize it. Let me not be misunderstood as to the only ground for the salvation of the soul, while I am employing the illustrative medium of my text for referring to the means by which a man is to work out his own salvation. In the largest and fullest sense of the term, "salvation is of the Lord." "By grace are ye saved." The loud cry in heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," must be re-echoed on earth. All connected with our salvation that includes merit or worthiness belongs to God. The question, however, now before me is this: Granted that the salvation of the soul of man is a possibility, not a necessity, by what means is such to be an actual fact to the individual man who has broken the laws of God? On any other subject, except religion, I should have hesitated to detain an assembly like this, for a single moment, by pointing out the distinction between a possibility and that which is actual and real. We discriminate nicely, most accurately, upon all other subjects, never confounding the *possible* with the *actual* and the *necessary*, and to remark upon any such distinction, on any other theme except that of religion, would be as the utterance of the veriest truism. But, my brethren, there are thousands of men in our country jeopardising their souls' salvation by the confusion into which their minds are brought on this point. They have heard that God is love,—that God so loved the world as to give his only Son to redeem the world with his most precious blood; and they have drawn the conclusion that *therefore* they shall be saved, because Christ has died for sinners. And so widely spread is this thought amongst masses of the population, that they employ what they presume is an admitted certainty on all hands, in reference to this subject, as one of the modes—the minor modes—of giving emphasis to an assertion: "It is true,—as true as I hope to be saved,"—as though it could never cross your mind, for a single moment, that you should have a shadow of a doubt in reference to that event. My dear brethren, as I read this Holy Book, God declares

his willingness that you all may be saved; but God affirms not, in reference to any one of you, an absolute necessity. The great and important inquiry, then, is, since salvation is of the Lord, how has He appointed it? What has He appointed as means and conditions on man's part to be complied with, so that the *possible* shall become to the sinner the *actual*.

My first statement, then, on the authority of this Book is, *there must be repentance towards God*. It is worth noticing, my brethren, that the Holy Scriptures take for granted that all men on earth admit certain facts to be true, and that there is, through our whole humanity, a consciousness of certain mental and moral feelings. The Bible addresses you as a man that believes that there is a God; and the very first verse that you read in the Holy Book enlarges the sphere of your knowledge and of your facts,—“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” I said that man, every where, is supposed to have a consciousness of certain mental and moral feelings. The first passage in this Holy Book in which the word *repentance* or the word *repenting* occurs, is in the sixth chapter of the Book of Genesis, in that remarkable verse, “It repented God that he had made man.” Of course we understand the employment of the figurative language. It is in keeping with the style familiar to us all, as when we speak of the eye of God going to and fro in the earth, and of the hand of God being stretched out, and of the heart of God yearning towards his creatures, loving them; but I appeal to that verse in confirmation of what I have said, that the sacred Scriptures recognize it as a matter of universal consciousness, that man has certain mental and moral feelings. It would have been utterly unintelligible to man unless there had been a knowledge consciously of the subject. It would have been altogether mystery, as much so as if you were to attempt to describe colour to some one that was born blind. I venture to say, that there is no man in this assembly to-night who is unacquainted consciously with the nature of repentance. We all learned the lesson of repentance at a very early period of our lives. We felt ourselves to be under tutors and governors, and, therefore, to be under law, before that we understood we were under law to God. I can throw many of you back to an early period of your lifetime in proof of what I am now asserting. There was a command given to you by one who had authority, recognized authority by you,—say a father, for instance. That command was plainly given, most distinctly enunciated; there could be no mistake, you really understood what was meant; but, in an evil hour, in a moment of temptation, through the influence and the sympathy of evil companions, and from the uprising of your own depraved nature, you transgressed that commandment. You may remember the sleeplessness of that night which followed that day of transgression; you may remember the thoughts that came to trouble you; you may remember the remorse and the sorrow that you felt; you may remember the purpose which you formed that night, that you would, the very next day, confess that you had done wrong, that you would promise to do better, that you would ask for forgiveness. Here you have repentance fitting to such relationship between the one who had authority to command and the one whose duty it was to obey. My brethren, I regret it as a great misfortune, that, when a man opens this Book and finds in it words and terms with which he is perfectly familiar in all other books, and understands them, as he believes, pretty accurately, I deem it to be a great misfortune, that, when a man meets with words and terms here, which he is accustomed to use in ordinary conversation,—he employing them intelligibly, and those who listen to the words comprehending the meaning accurately,—that he supposes that, because they are in this Book, they must have some singularly mystical and mysterious meaning. I have quoted a passage already, that “life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel.” Allow me just, however, to say that that rendering, “brought to light,” does not exactly give us the idea intended by the Apostle. He does not teach us that the Gospel contained the primitive revelation on this subject, so that, until the Gospel was proclaimed, “life and immortality” were unknown among men, but that they were brought to light by the Gospel in this sense—a clearer light, the subject made more manifest and potent, that made manifest which had been comparatively obscure. So is it that the Gospel of Jesus Christ comes and flashes its light upon the spirit of man, and upon the truths of God, developing them in higher and clearer manifestations. Never suppose, then, that when you hear from the pulpit such a term as this, “evangelical repentance,” you must fold your arms, as though you were about to listen to some mysterious revelation that was to be made to you, that you were to discard from your mind all that you had thought and felt in your whole lifetime about repentance. Depend upon it, that in repentance towards God you will find the very elements which are existent in all real repentance; and yet the Gospel shall

be connected with a higher, fuller working of them out. You have noticed that I said, *repentance towards God*. I know not of any system of religion extant in the world, recognizing a future state of existence and accountability, which does not include repentance as a part of its creed. If you are inclined to suppose deism to be a system of religion, why, the most celebrated, perhaps, of the deists of the past age wrote earnestly upon the doctrine of repentance, and made it most prominent as the ground of a man obtaining favour with God. I need not tell you that John the Baptist commenced his ministry with this doctrine, that Jesus Christ went forth and preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." When Paul testified to the elders of Ephesus what the staple theme of his ministry had been, it was in these words: "Repentance towards God." All sin is a violation of the law of God; and this is the great evil of sin. There are other evils connected with sin, but this is the greatest; it seems to overshadow all the others. David, in his penitent state, recognized it—"I have sinned against thee; against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." It was not that he overlooked the injury he had inflicted upon Uriah and upon Bathsheba, but at that moment: he had such an absorbing view of ~~God~~, as being a violation of God's law, that he exclaimed, as I have just quoted, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned." It was thus with the penitent prodigal: "I will arise and go to my Father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven."

But there will be sorrow for sin, if there be repentance towards God. Allow me just to say that this sorrow for sin is not an arbitrary appointment by Almighty God. That is a most erroneous view which some persons take of it; and they seem to think hardly of God on account of it. It is not an arbitrary appointment; I appeal to the consciousness of the men whom I am addressing this evening. The point is this. A man cannot really see and admit that he has done wrong without feeling sorry for it, without what you would designate remorse or regret. There may be great diversity in the depth and in the expression of sorrow. The causes of such variety, perhaps, lie in some instances, too deep for our investigation and announcement. I am inclined to think the diversity is, perhaps most generally, one of temperament. I am not overlooking the fact, that there may be various degrees of light and knowledge that a man may have concerning the evil of sin and the purity of God's law; and, perhaps, after all, the temperament of man has very much to do with modifying the manifestation of sorrow. I have noticed this at the grave-side. It has been my duty to commit to the grave, dust to dust, ashes to ashes, earth to earth, some parent; and orphan children have stood around that grave. I have been interrupted for a moment by the wailings and pitiful outcries of some of the number; but there has stood one of them, perhaps the eldest, and not a tear in his eye,—his countenance blanched, his lips quivering, his whole frame trembling. Oh! what would he give for bursting tears to have relieved the pressure on his brain, and the agony at his heart! It was not his temperament to manifest his sorrow by outbreaks, by bursts of grief, such as the others had exhibited. These are but externals. They are but circumstances. All I contend is, that, if there be repentance really towards God, on account of sin, there will be a measure of grief and sorrow of heart. If a man is not prepared so far as to exclaim, "The burden of my sin is intolerable to be borne," at all events, he will exclaim, "The remembrance of my sin is grievous unto me." But, if there be this repentance towards God, there will be an honest confession of sin to God. How distinctly this is insisted upon in the sacred Scriptures, I need scarcely say to those of you who read the Word of God. Among the feeble objections which I have heard advanced against the necessity of prayer, perhaps the very weakest assumes this form—What need is there of confessing sins to a Being who knows all things? Granted that God is omniscient, what need can there be on your part to make confession to Him of your transgression? My answer is twofold. First, that God, against whom I have sinned, and from whom I am seeking forgiveness, requires confession of sin from me. But I have another reason, and I wonder that it does not occur to men who have put forth the objection in the very feeble form that I have repeated to you, a guilty mind seeks relief by confession, and in confession who has not felt it? Who, in the days of his childhood, has not felt, that the unburdening of his heart to some one whom he had grieved and offended has relieved him? It was only the other day, that I saw in one of your daily journals an account of some man under sentence of death for a terrible crime. He had pleaded "not guilty" at the bar, and again and again he had most positively asserted his innocence; but the time appointed for his execution drew nigh. He had passed two or three sleepless nights and days, still, day after day, repeating that he was an innocent and injured man; but he sent at last for the chaplain, or for

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some Christian minister and he opened out his whole heart to him, detailing minutely his transgression, and confessing altogether the crime that had been charged against him; and I marked it as something to be noted, that the record in the paper was, the criminal seemed greatly relieved after he had made the confession, and sank into a quiet sleep for three or four hours afterwards. So it is in the very constitution of that nature which God has given me; and Almighty God lays hold upon this. But then, let me press the thought upon your minds that the confession that God requires is to Himself, to Him whose law we have broken. "I will arise and go unto my father," says the prodigal, "and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight,"—true to what I have just been speaking of, seeking for relief, he went to the parent whose laws he had especially broken, and whose authority he had despised. I take it that he would not have had the mental relief that he was seeking for, if he had only got so far as this, "I will arise, and return home, and will go to my brother, and tell him what I have been doing." No, "I will arise, and go unto my father. I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight." Unto that God whose laws man has broken, man must confess his sins. And let me add, that no man has any thing like an idea of either the nature or the enormity of his sins till he begins to confess them. In the first instance, they appear few and far between, and the task of recounting them seems to be an easy one, just as children deem it an easy thing to number the stars immediately after sunset. There is first one star there, and a second there, and a third there, and a fourth there. The task is nearly done. But I say to that child, "Begin and reckon from that bright star," and, in a few minutes, the deepening shades of night have brought out fresh stars, and, all-bewildered, the little one gives up the task, and speaks of the stars as innumerable. I do not wonder at a penitent sinner, aided by that reviver of memory, the Holy Spirit,—I do not wonder that he should say, "My sins are more in number than the very hairs of my head." But, if this repentance be a genuine one, there will be a purpose to abandon sin. Now, we demand that from a fellow-creature, as the real evidence of genuine repentance. Let there be a repetition of the act, a continuance in the conduct that offends us, though the tears may flow profusely, and the protestations be most earnest, we harden our hearts. Nothing will satisfy us that there is a genuine repentance, unless there is a putting away of that which offends us. So is it with God. But it must not be a purpose; it must be a reality. I am speaking of repentance towards God. It is not a purpose to confess sin, but it is a confessing sin. It is not a purpose to be sorry, but it is mourning before God with a broken heart. It is not a purpose to forsake sin, but doing it. I scarcely know the man but who intends, at some time or other, to alter his course of life. You have a common saying that a certain place is paved with good intentions. There is the purposing in our minds, but it is the doing of it that God requires. "Let the wicked man forsake his way." The genuine penitent is the man that is seeking for this salvation. Has he lived without prayer? He will begin to pray. Has he lived in the neglect of the Scriptures? He will read God's Word. Has he neglected to attend the house of God? He will listen to words whereby he may be saved. Has he broken God's commandments flagrantly, been a blasphemer, a drunkard, a sensualist, a licentious man, a dishonest man? whatever may have been his iniquity, in the strength of God's grace, he resolves to put it away. Almighty God has settled the point. No man will learn really to do good, who has not taken an initiatory step and ceased to do evil. This is the relative position of the lesson, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well."

Now, supposing the man thus to have repented, there is something else required of him for his salvation,—*faith in the atoning blood of Christ*. Never can there be the forgiveness of sin without repentance. But settled peace of mind cannot result from mere repentance. All the statements that you listen to, from time to time, about the sufficiency of repentance upon the part of a man are futile. If you will examine them carefully, they will not apply to a human government, much less to a Divine. They would not stand examination at the Old Bailey, much less at the judgment seat of Christ. God alone knows on what terms it was befitting Him, such a being as He is, to pardon sin. God is the moral governor of the world, of the universe. There is what I may venture to call a public character of God, which had to be preserved before the universe. God has declared how that character has been preserved. He has set before us his merciful purpose through Jesus Christ his Son, that He has given Him to redeem us, being made a curse for us, dying in our stead. The just for the unjust. So that, having illustrated, by his own purity, the law, magnifying it and making it honourable, and having satisfied its claims in His own body on the tree, God being thus satisfied in all his perfections and attributes, is prepared

righteously to indulge the love of his heart towards the human race, and He offers a free forgiveness to all who seek it penitently and humbly, looking unto Jesus, and trusting in Him alone.

Let me tell you in a word, too, however, that there are contingencies that must be taken into the account. I have stated what is absolutely required under the most favourable circumstances; and without repentance towards God, and without faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, through which a man obtains the blessing of God, there can be no entrance into heaven. Do you ask me what the extras possibly might be? Just write them down on the tablets of your memory, First, *exposure to reproach and contempt for Christ's sake*. The Lord has forewarned us of it. "Marvel not," says he, "if the world hate you." Now, perhaps, on this subject your feelings are peculiarly sensitive. It has been your study to have the good word of every body. Write it down as distinctly as possible, that, from the day you determine to save your soul, you may be exposed to reproach and contempt.

Secondly, put down as a contingency, *abandonment by relatives and friends*. Our Lord tells us, that, under certain circumstances, a man's foes shall be those of his own household. He tells you that one of the results of his coming into this world would be the setting of parents against children, and children against parents, a father-in-law against his son-in-law, and the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law. Now yours, it may be, has been a very happy domestic circle. You are the only one of that entire circle that has ever thought as you are thinking, and the step you take may lead to their rejection of you. Put it down as a possibility.

Add this to the figures,—*partial injury in property and circumstances*. The principles which you will adopt, you will find, will bring you into conflict with some with whom you have previously worked in harmony. Supposing you should be in some employment of others, your conscience will have a peculiar sensitiveness upon the subjects of honesty and of truthfulness; and it comes within a possibility that you may be given to understand very soon that sanctimoniousness on your part cannot be tolerated. They expect you to be what they advertised for, "a pushing young man," and it will not do to have qualms of conscience. Or you have begun in some small way of business, endeavouring to provide for yourself and family; and those who support you are mainly the gay and the dissipated; and you have associated with them; but you have abandoned them, and they have resolved that they will abandon you. Just write it down, as a possibility, amongst the extras—persecution for Christ's sake; imprisonment for Christ's sake; death for Christ's sake. And now add up the two columns, and look at the total; and a very natural question arises, Is it really worth so much? the price demanded is high. Either the requirements are exorbitant, or what you may have to tell us of the advantages must indeed be very great. My brethren, I hesitate not to say, that if, in addition to all that will be absolutely required of every man—repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ—all that I have stated as possibilities, the extras and contingencies were also demanded; if, from the hour of your decision for God, your name was to be cast out as evil, your relatives and friends were to abandon you, you were to be injured in your property and prospects of life, if a persecution that consigned you to a dungeon, and ultimately to the scaffold, were to follow,—if only, all through, and to the very end, you could say, with truth, "Christ in me the hope of glory," you

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would be immeasurably the gainers. If you ask me to be more explicit than these general terms indicate as to the advantages, I will attempt it for a moment. You will have peace with God, perfect peace,—“the peace of God which passeth all understanding,” will keep your hearts and minds in his knowledge and in his love. If you have known what it is to fear the frown of God, and to look forward to futurity as being to fall into the hand of God as into a consuming fire, you may, by contrast, form some idea of what it is to have the clouds dispersed and the smile of God resting upon you. You shall have freedom from the tyranny of sin and of Satan, no longer led captive by the devil at his will. I cannot promise you the good things of this life, as they are designated—wealth and honours. I cannot promise you long life and uninterrupted bodily health and vigour. I can give you one great promise, that God will keep: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things,” needful for you, “shall be added unto you.” This I can promise you in God’s name,—you, a man born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards,—that in your hours of sorrow you shall have support; that in your seasons of affliction you shall have the presence of God to cheer you; that it will be scarcely a figure of speech, that underneath and round about you shall be the everlasting arms, and that, when the hour comes which, ere long, each one of us must see, the hour of death, there will be a rod, and a staff, and a guide, for you through the valley; and, after death, brethren,—there is a silence in Scripture as to the details,—a future blessedness. “It doth not yet appear what we shall be.” There are just little indications to cheer us up. “Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” There shall be no death; there shall be no sin; God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. But as to the details, this Book, true to itself, does not refer to them. I have always regarded it as one of the internal evidences of the truth of revealed religion, that no attempt is made fully to describe the happiness of heaven. All false religions have made the attempt. The Koran of the Mahomedan, the Shaster of the Hindoo, have done so; so that, had I one or the other before me, I could, without any very great stress of the imagination, picture to my mind all the happiness that awaited me in another state of being, through the thousands and millions of years assigned for the enjoyment of that happiness. But I should not like to know all about the heaven that awaits me after death, the horizon of it could not be very widely extended, if my present vision was sufficiently strong to see it; and the sea of glory in which our spirits shall bathe could not be very deep, if I had now a hand strong enough to throw a line and plummet which could fathom its profundity. “It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Another question is proposed, and I close. Am I able to pay the price? Is it not above my ability? Brethren, if any one doctrine declared in this volume is prominent and earnest, it is the truthfulness and sincerity of God: “He hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner.” He makes the offer of salvation to every one of you. He gives a call to repentance to each one of you who has broken his laws; the invitation is, “Whosoever will, let him come.” But do you ask me, “How am I to begin?” Yield to the spiritual influence which is now resting upon your heart. Be true to the convictions of an enlightened and awakened conscience. Put away sin. Forsake evil companions. Begin to pray, for that is the grand evidence of the Spirit’s work upon the heart. You point

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me to a human body yonder, and you tell me it is a corpse. You say, it is breathless. I understand you. It is breathless, lifeless. But yonder is a man dead in trespasses and in sins. He is prayerless. I understand it, if prayerless, graceless. But you tell me there is some hope, for you have just put to the lips of that human body a glass, and you are certain that that glass is dimmed with breath. You have examined the heart, and there is a slight pulsation. There is life where there is breath. And, blessed be God, there is life where there is a praying spirit. Yield to that Spirit which prompts you to pray. You will pray in the Spirit, and with the Spirit; and remember He is the Spirit that helps our infirmities. Mark me, the great work of the Spirit is to bring the sinner to Jesus. The office of the Spirit is to glorify Christ. He takes of the things which are Christ's, and reveals them unto us. You will use what are called the means of grace; but do understand words, as I have already said, in reference to religion intelligibly. In all other subjects you never confound the means with the end. Alas, that men should do it in religion! They tell me that they have been to the means. 'I want to know whether they have been to Jesus, to the Saviour, to trust in Him.

Come, then, with whatever sense of guilt there may be in your conscience. Come now in spirit to our God, through the sacrifice of his Son; and remember He justifies the ungodly.

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come."

Amen, and God grant it for us all.

HOW LONG HALT YE BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS?

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 6TH, 1857,

BY THE REV. R. W. DIBDIN, M.A.,

AT WEST STREET EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, ST. GILEN'S.

"How long halt ye between two opinions?"—1 Kings xviii. 21.

THESE were the words of the prophet Elijah. He lived in the days of that very wicked king, Ahab, King of Israel—a kingdom which was begun when the ten tribes revolted under Jeroboam, in the reign of Rehoboam, King of Judah. They revolted not only from their lawful king, but also from the King of kings; and forsook the service of Jehovah to serve idols, the work of men's hands—yes, to worship devils! so great was their wickedness, encouraged by Ahab, that very abominable king. Here we notice, my brethren, what it is to have a bad king, and what a blessing it is, like us, to have a good sovereign. Ahab was a wicked man himself, and the cause of wickedness in others; and if you read history, you will find that the wickedness of the people, in different ages and nations, that has brought down the judgments of Almighty God has been, in a great number of cases, owing to the wickedness of their rulers, who have led the way in the path of wickedness, and thus opened the door for the judgments of heaven. It was so in Samaria. Elijah, the prophet of the Most High, was sent, therefore, to declare the judgment of God upon them; and it came in such a form, that there was no mistaking the supernatural agency of God in the matter. "As the Lord God of Israel liveth," saith he, "before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Oh, think—especially in such a fervid land as that—of the effect of the withholding of the gracious dew of heaven and of the refreshing showers from the earth! For three years, or nearly so, it continued; and in the third year the prophet Elijah showed himself to Ahab.

It may be well to read the passage in which the context stands. Commencing at the 17th verse you read,—“It came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim.” He picks him out—Thou, and the people who follow you; therefore you have troubled Israel. You are the troubler, the ringleader in rebellion:—“Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, I even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.” It has always been so; the Devil has always had more prophets than the Lord. There have always been false teachers in greater numbers than true teachers. Although in some ages, nations may make a nearer approach to an exception to the general rule, as our own age and nation happily, yet it is true now; taking the teachers together, Satan hath many more than the Lord Jesus Christ. We must not forget that there are the whole of the Popish teachers; these are a large number. And not only these, but also Socinian teachers; not a very small number, I am sorry to say. Then there are other kinds of false teachers—Swedenborgians, Mormonites; to say nothing of those who eat the bread of a Protestant Church, and are doing the work of the Pope and the Devil. Then avowed Infidel teachers; they are many. Shame it should be so! At this very moment when we are gathered together in this sanctuary to worship Jesus, there are in this metropolis thousands gathered together to worship human reason, and

to hear men get up and say, the Bible is a lie, and Christ is not God! Now, when you add all these false teachers together, you will find now, as it was then, that Satan hath more than Jesus; alas! that it should be so.—“Let them, therefore, give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.” There are some persons who think it wrong to mix anything like irony or sarcasm in religion, especially in preaching; and I think there may be too much of it; but, you see, it is not without inspired authority, that something of the kind may be used on fitting occasions. Certainly, this was a very humorous speech of the Prophet Elijah. What a thing to say to these poor men in their ignorance,—perhaps your god is sleeping, or, it may be, he is talking, and you must speak louder in order to get his attention! There is no harm in a laugh at the right time and in the right place. There is a great deal of wickedness in many men’s laughter, such laughter as you sometimes hear with ribaldry and oaths; all such laughter is madness. There is a time to laugh, and there is a time not to laugh. Now, here was a time to ridicule these people. It was no laughing matter with *them*, though; they were very serious upon the matter, and instead of being amused, as some might be amused, by this taunting speech of the prophet, they took his advice,—“And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.” Very shocking! but at the same time very instructive. These men were in earnest; a vast deal more so than many Christians are. After all, you see, they meant what they said; they acted according to their profession. We think it, and properly think it, a very foolish thing that men should suppose they please God by cutting themselves with knives, or that they could prevail with him by shedding their blood. At the same time, these men showed their sincerity, and that is not a bad thing in the right place. Let us avoid their superstition; but let us imitate their sincerity and their zeal.

“And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. And Elijah said unto all the people, come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the Word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.” What is all that water for? Not very necessary for a burnt offering, some might think, and rather an unpropitious beginning. It was to show the people that there was no mistake this time, that there was no collusion, no contrivance, no trick. I have no doubt, whatever, that if it had not been for the pouring of these barrels of water, it would have been said among infidels in the present day,—“Elijah imposed upon the people. The fact is, he lighted it himself in some way that they did not understand.” But here you see it was actually drenched with water; in order to show what came to pass afterwards, that the fire which descended from heaven “licked up the water,” as the expression is. And then, when the people saw that the fire did, indeed, descend from heaven, and that Jehovah was pleased to own his servant Elijah, they cried out with one voice, “Jehovah, he is God, Jehovah, he is God.” The Lord showed his power, and the people acknowledged it, and they acknowledged his Prophet.

Now, you must notice that in the text the Prophet Elijah, before this miracle was wrought, warns the people against the danger of not profiting by so remarkable a display of Divine power, about to take place before their eyes. He commences, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" You are going to see something which ought to decide you, something which ought to make you to a man desert the cause of Baal and of false gods, and to acknowledge Jehovah, the only and the true God. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" "Will it be much longer?" "Will you halt after what you will see soon?" Yes; it was so. They did not use the advantage, notwithstanding they had it afforded them. They said, "Jehovah, he is God;" but still they went on in their wickedness, and still they served Baal. Some people might think it extraordinary; but there is a very large class of persons to be found in this metropolis, who are, I am sorry to say, like unto those same Israelites; very like them in this, that they are convinced in their intellects, and in some measure touched and awakened in their consciences, and yet are so "tied and bound by the chain of their sins," that they will follow the Devil, and the lusts of the flesh, and the world and its vanities. There are many who hear faithful evangelical preaching, who feel and own it to be God's truth, and acknowledge that there is a certain power accompanying it which does not accompany other teaching; yet, the effects soon subside, and though they may, perhaps, have formed some hasty resolutions, they go back, like the sow which has been washed, to the mire, or like the dog to its vomit again.

I preached from this text twenty years ago, and I printed that sermon; and I really do not know that in all those years anything has occurred which should lead me to change the line of thought which I then adopted. I suggested two heads; first, nothing but decided holiness is of any value in religion; and, second, the folly of hope while living a worldly life. Let us endeavour to speak plainly and briefly to these two points.

I. We say, in the first place, that nothing but decided holiness will avail in the matter of religion. Not a little is meant when we say this. It is a strange thing that worldly men—that is, unconverted men—when they are speaking of religious doctrine, almost invariably set themselves against the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. They praise good works; they talk about good works; and they affirm that it is a wrong thing to teach that persons are to be saved and justified before God by the imputed righteousness of another, and that their own works are to have no part whatever in the justification or salvation of the sinner. They say that this is most objectionable. Well, when we examine their doings, we are much surprised to find that, whatever they *say* about works, they do not take care to have plenty of them. It is a strange thing that a man who says he is no saint, and would not look for salvation by faith alone, but thinks it far better that men should trust in good works—it is strange that men who think so do not take pains to *have* these good works. Is it the case that men are not particular about doctrine, but rather have a distaste for it, who say, "I do not so much care about faith, and doctrine, and religious ordinances; I think God is holy, good, and pure, and that he is more pleased with goodness than anything else?" Is it the case, I ask, that such persons are more given to goodness than other people? I do not find my experience affirms that. Do we find that rich, worldly-minded men, spare as much money, as they possibly can, from their large incomes, in order to give to the poor? I do not think the poor find much of their relief comes from that quarter. Is it true that men who cry up good works, as being pleasing to God, will give up their luxuries and wasteful expenditure, in order to have more to expend on good works—as, for instance, the spread of Christianity, the support of hospitals, or such things as contribute to the well-being of the poor? Why, no; I have not seen much proof of it, but I have seen and heard much to the contrary. So that if it were granted, what they say, that good works do something for the salvation of the soul, they would be no better off, for they *have not* the works which they praise so much. They would come nearer the truth, if—instead of saying, men will be justified by their works, in part at least—if they were to say, "none but those who do good works will be saved," we should agree with them *exactly*, because the Inspired Word of God says the same. It is what we say, in the first head of our discourse, that nothing but decided holiness is of any value in religion. We say, as a matter of doctrine, that no man will be saved from the wrath to come unless his sins be pardoned through faith in Christ, "whose blood cleanseth from all sin;" nor his person be justified except through the imputed righteousness of Christ. This is the truth—"He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Without faith it is impossible a man can be pardoned, or

justified, and therefore saved. With faith any man *may* be saved ; without faith no man *will* be saved.

We say farther, while we teach faith, we teach works also. By the Holy Ghost's teaching, we learn from the mouth of the Apostle James, "Faith without works is dead, being alone." Where faith is, there works will be too. As soon may you expect to have coldness and darkness where the rays of the sun appear, as to have no works where there is faith. Both must, and both will come together. As the tree may be known by its fruits, so, as saith our article, may faith be known by its works. We have nothing to say against works ; it is the subject in hand, the very thing we are talking about—that men ought to do good works, and that men will be damned if they do not good works. But, at the same time, let them come in their proper place ; Faith, first, as the means of salvation ; Works, next, as the proof of faith. We say that, and so saith the Scripture.

There seems, therefore, not the least hope of salvation to any man who is not living a life of holiness. It matters not what a man *says* he believes, if he does not lead a holy life, he is a dead sinner. It does not matter what he says about election, or justification, or sanctification, or any other doctrine, if that man is not living a holy life, he is not a saved man, but he is still in his sins. My brethren, the Bible is the only acknowledged source of Divine teaching ; and the same Bible that teaches the Antinomian that a man is saved by faith without works, ought to teach him also that if he has faith he hath works. The Bible is to be our guide, and nothing else. "To the law and to the testimony ; if they speak not according to that Word, it is because there is no light in them." We do not want a church to come and interfere between us and God's inspired Word. Let the church do, as the Church of England does, take the Bible for its guide, and give all its teaching in subervieny and in submission to God's Word. We do not want a concurrent, or co-equal testimony from the church ; nothing of the kind. We want God's Word set before us ; and if it is to be expounded in any place, we wish it to be expounded in accordance with itself. Not one part set to contradict another, as sometimes is done—not one part set to undermine another ; but we wish the Bible, the whole Bible to be the foundation of our religion ; it is so in the Church of England. Our sixth article says :—"Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation : so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an Article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the Name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church." I wish every child in England knew the articles by heart ; I wish every man and woman knew them. Now, we say that if a man professes to believe the Gospel, and does not live a holy life, he is either a fanatic or he is a hypocrite, he is either a liar or a fool. A fool you know is the Scripture word for an unconverted sinner. He either thinks *that* the way of salvation, and in that case he is deluded, and is a fool ; or he knows it is not, and pretends to think it is so, and in that case he is a hypocrite. I say the Bible is to be our guide. When you read the Bible, would you believe a man if he were to tell you that holiness is not to be the test of a Christian ? Suppose you were on board ship, under the guidance of one who professed to have a chart to the desired haven, what would you think of that man if, when the chart said east, he went west, or, if when the chart said north, he went south ? What would you think of that man ? One of these things : either this man does not want to go to the place which he is professing to seek, or he does not believe that chart, or else he is a madman. What else could you think ? You could not think him honestly desiring to find the place, if he had confidence in the chart, and was in his right senses. Well, there is the picture of every man who, having the Bible in his hand, talks about faith saving him, and yet does not lead a holy life. The Bible is the Christian's chart. He is passing over the waves of this troublesome world, and he hopes to reach the haven of rest. The Bible says, there must be holiness as well as faith, not in order to salvation, but to prove that a man is saved.

Mark, it is not morality that I am speaking about ; I am speaking of holiness—a very large, comprehensive, full expression ; it includes much that is negative, and much that is positive. Look here :—"Whoso forsaketh not father and mother, and hateth not his own life cannot be my disciple." "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." How strong these words are ! I might pick out many more like them. Whose words are they ? They are the words of Christ himself. See what he says. Religion, if it be

anything, is all-absorbing; it carries all before it; it sweeps every thing that stands in its path. It is first, it is last, it is every thing at all times. This or nothing. It will allow nothing to interfere with its habitual acting. It will take the entire command of the heart; it will take the entire rule of the life. Whether it be worldly gain, whether it be the lusts of the flesh, or whether it be the pride of life, or whatever else it be, all is swept away before the authoritative claims of true religion, if a man be holy. Now, you notice Christ's strong words. He preached that a man must go so far, if it be necessary, as to hate his life. We know that Paul did this: he counted all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. A man must be the same, if he would have Paul's crown, and must have the same spirit, and lead the same kind of life. I pick these out as Christ's words, and I will tell you why. From their very strength. "He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me." Suppose your father says, "break the commandment." I cannot do it; I must honour my father and mother, but I cannot "break a plain commandment for any man on earth." "He that does not hate his own life cannot be my disciple." Ah, my brethren, it is one thing to hear it, and another thing to practice it. Do you think you and I could do as Hooper did, and Ridley, and Latimer, and Cranmer, and that other godly bishop who made one of the five? whose names shall be handed down to the latest posterity, as men who loved not their lives unto the death, and were ready to seal with blood their testimony against the accursed errors of Popery? Those men were burned alive at the stake, rather than deny their God, or own the blasphemous idolatries of Satan in the Church of Rome. These men took Christ at his word.

Now, these are Christ's words. I dwell on that, because many ignorant people—and there are many people very ignorant where a knowledge of the Bible is concerned; they may know other things very well; they may know their trade far better than I can tell them; they may know more of commercial and political matters, and of science; but as to the Bible, the ignorance of many people—indeed I may say of most people—is absolutely astonishing. Well, in speaking of Jesus and his words, many ignorant people speak of them as though they were kinder and gentler than all other parts of Scripture. Not only so, but they will take his picked words; as, for instance, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Very sweet words! "Oh, that thou hadst known (blood-thirsty Jerusalem!) the things that belong to thy peace." Very beautiful, indeed! Who would think that these very people were going to crucify him? Who would have expected the tenderness of heart shown in that address? Very many more passages might be quoted, showing that Christ had a tender heart; but he had also a truthful tongue. He said not only very kind things, but he said also very severe things. There are some who say, Look at the words of our Saviour! how harsh you are! how severe you are! Look at Jesus—he was all humility, all gentleness! No, he was not. He was gentle on proper occasions; but no man on earth ever said severer things than Christ. If you look at the Bible, you will find that it is so. Now, there are some who would set Jesus' words against all other parts of the Bible. Some say, "I do not care what Paul says; I take what Jesus says." What an impious thing is this! Do we not know that the same Holy Ghost wrote the whole of the Bible—that every man who wrote the Bible was inspired by the Holy Ghost? Where is the difference, then, between one part of the Bible and another? Can there be a contradiction between one part and another? No. The Holy Ghost is the same God as Christ, and the same God as the Father; there is but one God. We know there are three Persons, and that each by himself is God. We do not profess to understand the mystery; but we believe it because God has said that it is so. The whole Bible is the Word of God. If men would but bear that in mind, that the whole Bible is the Word of God, they would neither neglect doctrine, nor would they neglect practice; they would take them both together. They would believe that salvation is by faith; but, at the same time, they would acknowledge that there is no faith where there are no works. But vain man would be wise. It was the desire of wisdom that brought sin into the world. Do you not remember that the Devil, in the form of a serpent, told Eve, "If you eat this fruit you will be as God?" Then, there are some who will deny hell itself. What think you of a wise man denying the existence of hell? and when the text is put before him, "The wicked shall be turned into hell"—sooner than believe the plain word of God, because his wisdom will not acknowledge that a just and good God would make such a place as hell—he says, "that notion of hell fire is a mistake; instead of being a place of torment,

why, it is the *very depth of God's love!*" Such talking would almost make a man laugh, if he dare laugh at such profane stuff. What! hell the depth of the love of God? the hell that is prepared for the Devil and his angels? Monstrous, that any man could believe it himself, and expect other people to believe it! There are men who have said such things, and printed them. Alas! and it is true that, in our day, there are those who believe in imputed sanctification, and deny growth in grace. What is imputed sanctification? I do not believe in it, and I hope none of you ever will. What is that but teaching salvation in the Antinomian fashion? It means opposition to the law; It means making the law of none effect; because Christ has fulfilled it once, you and I need not obey it. So they say, sanctification is imputed as well as righteousness; and they deny the growing in grace. Sanctification, they say, is complete the moment a man believes. But what saith the Scripture? Through the whole tenour of the Bible you will find these things taught:—Sanctification is in a man, and makes him a different man from what he was before he was sanctified; sanctification is in him; justification is out of him. When we speak of justification, the idea of making a sinner absolutely righteous, of course, is a contradiction in terms. How can a man be righteous when every day he confesses himself a sinner? Righteousness is freedom from all sin; and to talk of a sinner being free from all sin is nonsense. I say, every sinner is righteous who believes; but then, it is by imputation he is accounted righteous—believing in Christ, he is accounted to be a righteous man. That is rational and intelligible. Sanctification is in him, while imputation of righteousness is God's work, clothing the believer in the robe of the righteousness of his Son. Sanctification is the work of the Spirit in the heart of the believer, moulding his life and temper to the holy, pure, and perfect law of God.

"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." I must notice, that in holiness I include religious duties. Do not confound holiness with morality. We give every one their due. It is not right to say that men who are not Christians are not moral. I believe the Socinian is no Christian, no more a Christian than Nana Sahib himself; nevertheless, Socinians may be moral in their way; they may be truthful and honest, amiable and industrious, and have many pleasing qualities, according to the letter of the law; but still they can have no holiness. Therefore, I say, holiness combines the two; it hath certain religious elements and certain moral elements. For instance, a Sabbath-breaker cannot be a holy man. Many Socinians do not think so much of keeping the Sabbath holy as we do; in fact, they have very little notion of holiness. A holy Sabbath to them is a pleasant Sabbath; a self-indulgent, comfortable, worldly-spent day would make a very holy Sabbath with most Socinians. But it is not the way in which we would say the Sabbath should be kept. Many Socinians take a leading part in promoting the Sunday bands in the parks. They and the Papists were the principal advocates of it; and they are now the principal supporters of the Anti-Sabbath League. They are the enemies of the Lord's-day. These Sunday bands were by many persons thought proper, and no harm at all, nothing inconsistent with the spirit of the day, but rather in accordance with it. To go into the park, and stand in the midst of 50,000 people of all descriptions, and hear light and play-house music, they think that very pleasant, and proper in the eyes of God. I was glad to see, when these men got only the paltry sum of £20 by their Sabbath pollution, that when they went to some charitable society and asked if they would have the money, the reply was, no, they would have nothing to do with it. They went to another—"Here's money for your charity." "We will not have it." You see they would not contaminate themselves with money got in that way. They went to a third party (I need not mention names), and that third party took it, with this curious observation, "We don't at all see why we should refuse money which is honestly got." Men have their own notions of money honestly got. But I do not think it was honestly got; I consider it was dishonestly got, when you consider the word dishonest in its right sense. If it is got by breaking the fourth commandment, I say the money is not more honestly got than if it is got by breaking the eighth commandment. I am glad there were some who would not pollute their coffers by accepting such badly got money. Why, the Jews to whom Judas sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, did better than that. You remember, when Judas sold our Lord, and afterwards hanged himself, that the chief priests took the thirty pieces of silver, and said, "It is not lawful for us to put it into the treasury, because it is the price of blood; we have bought the blood of Jesus with the money, it will never do to put it in a holy place, or apply it to a pious use." What was to be done with it? "Oh," they said, "we will buy a field to bury strangers in;" and

they called it *Aceldama*, the place of blood. It was an accursed place; they had no respect for strangers, and thought that would be an appropriate place for the money. It was accursed money; and it was to buy an accursed place, to bury accursed people in. I really think, if these people wanted to make use of the money raised by the Sunday bands, they had better have done something of the same sort—bought a sort of cemetery, a place to bury infidels in; then the money would have been laid out appropriately.

Every man, I say, who is holy will keep the Sabbath holy. Of course, he will attend the sacrament, he will be a man of prayer, he will be separated from the world, from its habits, maxims, and fashions; and known of men to be such. Observe, he must be *known* to be so. It must be seen in his history, and felt among his acquaintance that he is a holy man. Some say in answer to this, that they are too busy to be holy. "It may be well," they say, "for ministers whose trade it is, it may be well for rich people who have nothing else to do, it may be well for old people and little children, to be religious, and give their time to these things, such as church going, psalm singing, and reading religious books—it may be all very well for them; but as for me," says one, "I am too busy, the stern realities of life interfere too much to permit my giving attention to these things." Well, if that is so, we have but one answer—that they are too busy to be saved. It comes to this, if a man says plainly, "the fact is, if I attempt to be a holy man, I shall be a ruined man." What is the answer to that? "Be a ruined man, or you will be a damned man." There is no alternative. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world" by his busy activity, and be for ever in hell? What a foolish conclusion to come to—"I am too busy to be religious!" However, it is merely an excuse. The fact is, in almost all cases the strictest attention to religion does not prevent a man getting an honest livelihood. I do admit that it does prevent a man getting on so well as he otherwise would. In shops, counting-houses, in buying and selling, no matter what it is, if a man is religious, it is upon the whole rather against him in a worldly point of view. It is false teaching to say, "if you will be religious you will prosper in both worlds, and you will make the best of both worlds." On the contrary, religion does prevent a man getting on in the world. But if a man can get food and raiment, provided he can have eternal happiness in the world to come, he had far better be a poor man, and be able to say, "silver and gold have I none, but I have unsearchable riches for ever in the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour." So that, although we admit that religion hinders a man in temporal prosperity, we do not admit the excuse. A man may live, and live well, and yet be a holy man.

There are some, indeed, who attend church, and are very particular about ordinances, and even family duties, but who are, nevertheless, wanting in the practical every day exhibitions of the Christian character—in the moral duties which they ought to observe at home. Some people are ill-tempered with all their religion; some people waste their time. I often wonder what some people, who call themselves saints, and can sit in judgment on a sermon or a preacher, and who can give you to a nicety the degree of merit in both, I often wonder what they think they were called into the world to do. Surely, not merely to talk about religion! That is something, if a man can speak of Christ; still, he must do something else. It is not enough to talk about Christ; a man must copy the example of Christ, and be like him. Again, a man must be pre-eminently truthful, if he would be taken for a holy man; and he must have a forgiving spirit. Oh, how unforgiving some religious men are! They will bear malice, and yet talk about justification, and sanctification and all these things. No, this will not do; there must be both; there must be holiness and moral duties.

II. I must be brief on our second head—the folly of hope while living a worldly life. This has been shown. When I have shown that a holy life is required, it comes as a natural inference that it is a foolish thing for a man to hope he can be saved when he is not living that life. If what we have said is plain, then the folly of a worldly man hoping to be saved must be plain also. Yet, there is many a moral man who will try to crush fears that rise in his mind. I do not say that such a man is openly vicious; I will admit him to be as virtuous a man as an unconverted man can be. I say that man is foolish if he hopes to be saved, and still more foolish if there rise in his mind doubts and fears, while he is neglecting the spiritual part of religion. He thinks, perhaps, it is not all right; I see my wife is a holy woman; I see my daughter is pious; what if these people should be right after all? Now, when these thoughts rise, as rise they do in the hearts of thousands, and I have no doubt they have risen in the hearts of many here to-night, what shall I say to describe

your folly in crushing those thoughts, and in escaping from those self-suspicions? Oh, you should listen to that monitor; you, for instance, who have heard the invitation to come to the table of the Lord, some of you who were here this morning, and yet have never come. Why not? Because you think you are not fit to be there. Granted; and if not fit to be there, not fit to enter the kingdom and sit down with the Lamb. Will you be at ease? Can you go home, and lie down in peace, and allow the dark night to find you as every dark night has found you? Will you give sleep to your eyes, and sleep, I may say, on the brink of eternal damnation? For that is your case. And conscience helps me here, for you have that within you, which tells you that the words I speak are the words of truth and soberness. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Do not halt any longer. If the Devil be God serve him. If Jesus Christ has died for your sins, believe in him. If Jesus Christ has fulfilled the righteousness of the law, trust in him with all your hearts. Turn your back upon the world as virtuous Ruth did upon her father's land, and went with her mother Naomi, and said, "Thy God shall be my God." Take a step to-night, and, in the strength of the living God, determine from this time forth, in the words of one of old—"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Halt no longer, you know that God is with us to-night; you know that God ratifies what I say; you know in your consciences that what I am telling is the truth of the living God. "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel;"—aye, good concerning you. If you weep at the consciousness of sin, if you look back with sorrow at sin committed; I tell you, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be like wool, and though they be red as scarlet, that same blood will make them as the driven snow. Come now, and be saved. Turn from the world, and come into the Church of the living God!

One word to you that believe. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" What is the reason you are so troubled and cast down from time to time? Worldly men feel no trouble about it; they are going to hell as fast as time and their own wicked hearts can carry them. Yet you, who have the evidences of conversion, who love the Lord, his people, his day, his law, are troubled. "Ah," you say, "there is the difficulty; I do not love his law." Why not? "Because I am such a sinner. I feel, daily, corrupt lusts, evil passions, bad tempers, the cares of the world; I feel myself (it may be some will say) a monster of iniquity." Do you? do your neighbours think that? What says your wife? what says your son? what says your servant? what says your father? Do these say you are a monster of iniquity? Ask them, and they say, "No, he is a devoted, faithful, and true Christian." Ask again, is she such a wretch as she thinks herself to be? "Not in my eyes; I see her early rising to find time to pray, because she has little time during the day; rather than lose her hour in communing with her Father, she will rise with the sun. I see her, for the good of the poor—in many instances not much poorer than herself—spending and being spent in their service." Is she the wretch she thinks herself? does she call herself vile? What saith He? "Behold, thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." As we say of Jesus, "He is altogether lovely, and the fairest among ten thousand." "I am black," sayest thou. He says, "Thou art comely;" for he sees you not as you see yourself, but clothed in the imputed righteousness which he has wrought out for you. Come, now, halt no longer between two opinions. You know you are on the Lord's side; everybody knows it who knows you. You serve a leader; and not one day nor two days, not one year nor two years; you are always found in the right path. Nay, you are sometimes out of the path; I am myself. I should be very miserable indeed if I took up some people's religion. When you are out of the path, he restores you again. David was out of the path sometimes; Peter was out of the path, and yet Jesus restored his soul. And you—you do wrong. I know you do; you would tell a lie if you said otherwise. The man who professes to be always in the right is either so ignorant as not to know good from evil, or he is false. "In many things we offend all." The best saint that walks the earth is, by his own confession, a vile, polluted, worthless creature. And you feel that, do you? Paul felt the same; and if every saint of God has felt the same, why you cannot be exempt from the common experience. No longer doubt, but believe; no longer fear, but rejoice; and no longer hesitate, but believe that he himself saith to you, by my mouth, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

The New Park Street Pulpit.

GOD, THE ALL-SEEING ONE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 14, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"Hell and destruction are before the Lord : how much more then the hearts of the children of men?"
Proverbs xv. 11

You have often smiled at the ignorance of heathens who bow themselves before gods of wood and stone. You have quoted the words of Scripture, and you have said, "Eyes have they, but they see not; ears have they, but they hear not." You have therefore argued that they could not be gods at all, because they could neither see nor hear, and you have smiled contemptuously at the men who could so debase their understandings as to make such things objects of adoration. May I ask you one question—but one? Your God can both see and hear: would your conduct be in any respect different, if you had a god such as those that the heathen worship? Suppose for one minute, that Jehovah, who is nominally adored in this land, could be (though it is almost blasphemy to suppose it) smitten with such a blindness, that he could not see the works and know the thoughts of man: would you then become more careless concerning him than you are now? I trow not. In nine cases out of ten, and perhaps in a far larger and sadder proportion, the doctrine of Divine Omniscience, although it is received and believed, has no practical effect upon our lives at all. The mass of mankind forget God: whole nations who know his existence and believe that he beholds them, live as if they had no God at all. Merchants, farmers, men in their shops, and in their fields, husbands in their families, and wives in the midst of their households, live as if there were no God; no eye inspecting them; no ear listening to the voice of their lips, and no eternal mind always treasuring up the recollection of their acts. Ah! we are practical Atheists, the mass of us; yea, all but those that have been born again, and have passed from death unto life, be their creeds what they may, are Atheists, after all, in life; for if there were no God, and no hereafter, multitudes of men would never be affected by the change; they would live the same as they do now—their lives being so full of disregard of God and his ways, that the absence of a God could not affect them in any great degree. Permit me, then, this morning, as God shall help me, to stir up your hearts; and may God grant that something I may say, may drive some of your practical Atheism out of you. I would endeavour to set before you, God the all-seeing one, and press upon your solemn consideration the tremendous fact, that in all our acts, in all our ways, and in all our thoughts, we are continually under his observing eye.

We have in our text, first of all, *a great fact declared*,—"Hell and destruction are before the Lord;" we have, secondly, *a great fact inferred*,—"How much more then the hearts of the children of men?"

I. We will begin with THE GREAT FACT WHICH IS DECLARED—a fact which furnishes us with premises from which we deduce the practical conclusion of the second sentence—"How much more then the hearts of the children of men?" The best interpretation that you can give of those two words, "hell" and "destruction," is, I think, comprehended in a sentence something like this,—"Death and hell are before the Lord." The separate state of departed spirits, and destruction, *Abaddon*,

as the Hebrew has it, the place of torment, are both of them, although solemnly mysterious to us, manifest enough to God.

1. First, then, the word here translated "hell," might just as well be translated "death," or the state of departed spirits. Now, death, with all its solemn consequences, is visible before the Lord. Between us and the hereafter of departed spirits a great black cloud is hanging. Here and there, the Holy Spirit hath made chinks, as it were, in the black walk of separation, through which by faith we can see; for he hath "revealed unto us by the Spirit" the things which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard," and which the human intellect could never compass. Yet, what we know is but very little. When men die, they pass beyond the realm of our knowledge: both in body and in soul they go beyond our understandings. But God understands all the secrets of death. Let us divide these into several heads, and enumerate them.

God knows the burial places of all his people. He notes as well the resting-place of the man who is buried tombless and alone, as the man over whom a mighty mausoleum has been raised. The traveller who fell in the barren desert, whose body became the prey of the vulture, and whose bones were bleached in the sun—the mariner, who was wrecked far out at sea, and over whose corpse no dirge was ever wailed, except the howling of the winds, and the murmuring of the wild waves—the thousands who have perished in battle, unnumbered and unnoticed—the many who have died alone, amid dreary forests, frozen seas, and devouring snow-storms—all these, and the places of their sepulchre, are known to God. That silent grot within the sea, where pearls lie deep, where now the shipwrecked one is sleeping, is marked by God as the death-place of one of his redeemed; that place upon the mountain side, the deep ravine into which the traveller fell and was buried in a snow-drift, is marked in the memory of God as the tomb of one of the human race. No body of man, however it may have been interred or uninterred, has passed beyond the range of God's knowledge. Blessed be his name, if I shall die, and lie where the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep, in some neglected corner of the churchyard, I shall be known as well, and rise as well recognised by my glorious Father, as if interred in the cathedral, where forests of gothic pillars proudly stand erect, and where the songs of myriads perpetually salute high heaven. I shall be known as well as if I had been buried there in solemn pomp, and had been interred with music and with dread solemnities, and I shall be recognised as well as if the marble trophy and the famous pillar had been raised to my remembrance; for God knoweth no such thing as forgetfulness of the burying places of his children. Moses sleeps in some spot that eye hath not seen; God kissed away his soul, and he buried him where Israel could never find him, though they may have searched for him. But God knoweth where Moses sleeps; and if he knows that, he understands where all his children are hidden. Ye cannot tell me where is the tomb of Adam; ye could not point out to me the sleeping place of Abel. Is any man able to discover the tomb of Methuselah and those long-lived dwellers in the time before the flood? Who shall tell where the once-treasured body of Joseph now sleeps in faith? Can any of you discover the tombs of the kings, and mark the exact spot where David and Solomon rest in solitary grandeur? No, those things have passed from human recollection, and we know not where the great and mighty of the past are buried; but God knoweth, for death and Hades are open before the Lord.

And again, further, not only does he know the place where they were buried, but he is cognizant of the history of all their bodies after sepulture or after death. It has often been asked by the infidel, "How can the body of man be restored, when it may have been eaten by the cannibal, or devoured by wild beasts?" Our simple reply is, that God can track every atom of it if he pleases. We do not think it necessary to resurrection that he should do so, but if he so willed it, he could bring every atom of every body that hath ever died: although it hath passed through the most complicated machinery of nature, and become entangled in its passage with plants and beasts, yea, and with the bodies of other men, God hath it still within the range of his knowledge to know where every atom is, and it is within the might of his Omnipotence to call every atom from its wandering, and restore it to its proper sphere, and rebuild the body of which it was a part. It is true, we could not track the dust that long since has mouldered. Buried with exactest care, preserved with the most scrupulous reverence, years passed away, and the body of the monarch, which had long slept well guarded and protected,

was at last reached by the careless hand. The coffin had mouldered, and the metal was broken for the sake of its own value; a handful of dust was discovered, the last relics of one who was master of many nations. That dust by sacrilegious hand was cast in the aisle of the church, or thrown into the churchyard and blown by the winds into the neighbouring field. It was impossible for ever to preserve it; the greatest care was defeated; and at last the monarch was on a level with his slave, "alike unknowing and unknown." But God knows where every particle of the handful of dust has gone: he has marked in his book the wandering of every one of its atoms. He hath death so open before his view, that he can bring all these together, bone to bone, and clothe them with the very flesh that robbed them in the days of yore, and make them live again. Death is open before the Lord.

And as the body, so the soul when separated from the body is before the Lord. We look upon the countenance of our dying friend, and on a sudden a mysterious change passes over his frame. "His soul has fled," we say. But have we any idea of what his soul is? Can we form even a conjecture of what the flying of that soul may be, and what the august presence into which it is ushered when it is disentangled from its earthly coil? Is it possible for us to guess what is that state where spirits without bodies, perpetually blest, behold their God? It is possible for us to compass some imagination of what heaven is to be, when bodies and souls, reunited, shall before God's throne enjoy the highest bliss; but I do think, that so gross are our conceptions, whilst we are in our bodies, that it is almost, if not quite, impossible for any of us to form any idea whatever as to the position of souls, whilst in the disembodied state, between the hour of death and the time of resurrection.

"This much, and this is all, we know,
They are supremely blest;
Have done with sin, and care, and woe,
And with their Saviour rest."

But the best of the saints can tell us nothing more than this. They are blest, and in paradise they are reigning with their Lord. Brethren, these things are known to God. The separate state of the dead, the heaven of disembodied spirits, is within the gaze of the Most High, and at this hour, if so he pleased, he could reveal to us the condition of every man that is dead—whether he has mounted to Elysian fields, to dwell for ever in the sunlight of his Master's countenance, or has been plunged into hell, dragged down by iron chains, to wait in dreary woe the result of the awful trial, when "Depart ye cursed," must be the re-affirmation of a sentence once pronounced, and already in part endured. God understands the separate doom of every man's spirit before the great tribunal day—before the last sentence shall have been pronounced, death is open before the Lord.

2. The next word, "*destruction*," signifies hell, or the place of the damned. That also is open before the Lord. Where hell is, and what its miseries, we know not; except "through a glass darkly," we have never seen the invisible things of horror. That land of terror is a land unknown. We have much reason to thank God that he has put it so far off from the habitations of living mortals, that the pains, the groans, the shrieks, the yells, are not to be heard here, or else earth itself would have become a hell, the solemn prelude and the ante-past of unutterable torment. God has put somewhere, far on the edge of his dominions, a fearful lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; into that he cast the rebel angels, who (though by a license they are now allowed to walk the earth) do carry a hell within their bosoms, and are by-and-bye to be bound with chains, reserved in blackness and darkness for ever for them that kept not their first estate, but lifted the arm of their rebellion against God. Into that place we dare not look. Perhaps it would not be possible for any man to get a fair idea of the torments or the lost, without at once becoming mad. Reason would reel at such a sight of horror. One moment of listening to the shrill scream of spirits tortured, might for ever drive us into the depths of despair, and make us only fit to be bound in chains whilst we lived on earth. Raving lunatics surely we must become. But whilst God has mercifully covered all these things from us, they are all known to him; he looks upon them; yea, it is his look that makes hell what it is. His eyes, full of fury, flash the lightnings that scathe his enemies; his lips, full of dreadful thunders, make the thunders that now affright the wicked. Oh! could they escape the

eye of God, could they shut out that dreary vision of the face of the incensed Majesty of heaven, then might hell be quenched; then might the wheels of Ixion stand still; then might doomed Tantalus quench his thirst and eat to his very full. But there, whilst they lie in their chains, they look upwards, and they see ever that fearful vision of the Most High; the dreadful hands that grasp the thunderbolts, the dreadful lips that speak the thunders, and the fearful eyes that flash the flames that burn their souls, with horrors deeper than despair. Yea, hell, horrible as it is, and veiled in many clouds, and covered over with darkness, is naked before the vision of the Most High.

There is the grand fact stated—"Hell and destruction are before the Lord." After this the inference seems to be easy—"How much more then the hearts of the children of men?"

II. We now come to the GREAT FACT INFERRED.

In briefly entering upon this second part I will discuss the subject thus: You notice there an argument—"How much more then the hearts of the children of men?" I will therefore begin by asking, why does it follow that the hearts of men are seen by God? *Why—how—what—when—shall be four questions into which we shall divide what we have now to say.*

1. *Why* is it so clear, that "if hell and destruction are open before the Lord," the hearts of men must be very plainly viewed by him?

We answer, because the hearts of men are not so extensive as the realms of death and torment. What is man's heart? what is man's self? Is he not in Scripture compared to a grasshopper? Does not God declare that he "takes up the isles"—whole islands full of men—"as a very little thing. And the nations before him are but as the drop of a bucket?" If, then, the all-seeing eye of God takes in at one glance the wide regions of death,—and wide they are, wide enough to startle any man who shall try to range them through,—if I say, with one glance God seeth death and seeth hell through, with all its bottomless depths, with all its boundlessness of misery, surely, then, he is quite able to behold all the actions of the little thing called man's heart. Suppose a man so wise as to be able to know the wants of a nation and to remember the feelings of myriads of men, you cannot suppose it difficult for him to know the actions of his own family and to understand the emotions of his own household. If the man is able to stretch his arm over a great sphere, and to say, "I am monarch of all this," surely he shall be able to control the less. He who in his wisdom can walk through centuries shall not say that he is ignorant of the history of a year; he who can dive into the depths of science, and understand the history of the whole world from its creation, is not to be alarmed by some small riddle that happens at his own door. No, the God who seeth death and hell seeth our hearts, for they are far less extensive.

Reflect again, that they are far less aged too. Death is an ancient monarch; he is the only king whose dynasty stands fast. Ever since the days of Adam he has never been succeeded by another, and has never had an interregnum in his reign. His black ebon sceptre hath swept away generation after generation; his scythe hath mowed the fair fields of this earth a hundred times, and is shar; to mow us down, and when another crop shall succeed us he is still ready to devour the multitudes, and sweep the earth clean again. The regions of death are old domains; his pillars of black granite are ancient as the eternal hills. Death made his prey on earth long ere Adam was here. Those mighty creatures that made the deep hoary with their strength, and stirred the earth with their trappings—those elder born of nature's sons, the mighty creatures that lived here long ere Adam walked in Eden—death made them his prey; like a mighty hunter he speared the mighty lizard and laid it low, and now we dig it from the stony tomb, and wonder at it. He is our ancient monarch; but ancient as he is, his whole monarchy is in the records of God, and until death itself is dead, and swallowed up in victory, death shall be open before the Lord. How old, too, is hell!—old as the first sin. In that day when Satan tempted the angels, and led astray the third part of the stars of heaven, then hell was digged; then was that bottomless pit first struck out of solid rocks of vengeance, that it might stand a marvellous record of what God's wrath can do. The fires of hell are not the kindlings of yesterday: they are ancient flames that burned long ere Vesuvius cast forth its lurid flame. Long ere the first charred ashes fell upon the plain from earth's red volcanoes, hell's flames were burning; for "Tophet is prepared of old, the pile thereof is wood and much smoke; the breath of the Lord like a stream of

brimstone, doth kindle it. If, then, the ancient things, these old ones, death and hell, have been observed by God, and if their total history is known to him, how much more then shall he know the history of that mere animalculæ, that ephemera of an hour, that we call man? You are here to-day, and gone to-morrow; born yesterday—the next hour shall see our tomb prepared, and another minute shall hear, “ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” and the falling of the clod upon the coffin lid. We are the creatures of a day, and know nothing. We are scarcely here; we are only living and dead. “Gone!” is the greatest part of our history. Scarcely have we time enough to tell the story, ere it comes to its finish. Surely, then, God may easily understand the history of a beast, when he knows the history of the monarchies of death and hell.

This is the *why*. I need not give further arguments, though there be abundance deducible from the text. “How much more then the hearts of the children of men?”

2. But now, *how* does God know the heart? I mean, to what degree and to what extent does he understand and know that which is in man? I answer, Holy Scripture in divers places gives us most precise information. God knows the heart so well that he is said to “search” it. We all understand the figure of a search. There is a search-warrant out against some man who is supposed to be harbouring a traitor in his house. The officer goes into the lower room, opens the door of every cupboard, looks into every closet, peers into every cranny, takes the key, descends into the cellar, turns over the coals, disturbs the wood, lest anyone should be hidden there. Up stairs he goes: there is an old room that has not been opened for years,—it is opened. There is a huge chest: the lock is forced and it is broken open. The very top of the house is searched, lest upon the slates or upon the tiles some one should be concealed. At last, when the search has been complete, the officer says, “It is impossible that there can be anybody here, for, from the tiles to the foundation, I have searched the house thoroughly through; I know the very spiders well, for I have seen the house completely.” Now, it is just so that God knows our heart. He searches it—searches into every nook, corner, crevice and secret part; and the figure of the Lord is pushed further still. “The candle of the Lord,” we are told, “searches the secret parts of the belly.” As when we wish to find something, we take a candle, and look down upon the ground with great care, and turn up the dust. If it is some little piece of money we desire to find, we light a candle and sweep the house, and search diligently till we find it. Even so it is with God. He searches Jerusalem with candles, and pulls everything to daylight. No partial search, like that of Laban, when he went into Rachel’s tent to look for his idols. She put them in the camel’s furniture and sat upon them; but God looks into the camel’s furniture, and all. “Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord.” His eye searches the heart, and looks into every part of it.

In another passage we are told that God tries the reins. That is even more than searching. The goldsmith when he takes gold, looks at it, and examines it carefully. “Ah!” says he, “but I don’t understand this gold yet: I must try it.” He thrusts it into the furnace; there coals are heaped upon it, and it is fused and melted, till he knows what there is of dross, and what there is of gold. Now, God knows to the very carat how much there is of sound gold in us, and how much of dross. There is no deceiving him. He has put our hearts into the furnace of his Omniscience: the furnace—his knowledge—tries us as completely as the goldsmith’s crucible doth try the gold—how much there is of hypocrisy, how much of truth—how much of sham, how much of real—how much of ignorance, how much of knowledge—how much of devotion, how much of blasphemy—how much of carefulness, how much of carelessness. God knows the ingredients of the heart; he reduces the soul to its pristine metals; he divides it asunder—so much of quartz, so much of gold, so much of dung, of dross, of wood, of hay, of stubble, so much of gold, silver, and precious stones. “The Lord trieth the hearts and searcheth the reins of the children of men.”

Here is another description of God’s knowledge of the heart. In one place of Sacred Writ—(it will be well if you set your children to find out these places at home)—God is said to ponder the heart. Now, you know, the Latin word *ponder* means *weigh*. The Lord weighs the heart. Old Master Quarles has got a picture of a great one putting a heart into one scale, and then putting the law, the Bible, into the other scale, to weigh it. This is what God does with men’s hearts. They are

often great, puffed-up, blown out things, and people say, "What a great-hearted man that is!" But God does not judge by the appearance of a man's great heart, nor the outside appearance of a good heart; but he puts it in the scales and weighs it—puts his own Word in one scale and the heart in the other. He knows the exact weight—knows whether we have grace in the heart, which makes us good weight, or only pretence in the heart, which makes us weigh light weight when put into the scale. He searches the heart in every possible way, he puts it into the fire, and then thrusts it into the balances. Oh, might not God say of many of you, "I have searched your heart, and I have found vanity therein? Reprobate silver shall men call you; for God has put you in the furnace and rejected you." And then he might conclude his verdict by saying, "*Mene, mene, tekel*—thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." This, then, is the answer to the question, *How?*

The next question was, *What?* What is it that God sees in man's heart? God sees in man's heart a great deal more than we think of. God sees, and has seen in our hearts, lust, and blasphemy, and murder, and adultery, and malice, and wrath, and all uncharitableness. The heart never can be painted too black, unless you daub it with something blacker than the devil himself. It is as base as it can be. You have never committed murder, but yet you have had murder in your heart; you may never have stained your hands with lust and the aspersions of uncleanness, but still it is in the heart. Have you never imagined an evil thing? Has your soul never for a moment doted on a pleasure which you were too chaste to indulge in, but which for a moment you surveyed with at least some little complacency and delight? Has not imagination often pictured, even to the solitary monk in his cell, greater vice than men in public life have ever dreamed of? And may not even the divine in his closet be conscious that blasphemies, and murders, and lusts of the vilest class, can find a ready harbour even in the heart which he hopes is dedicated to God? Oh! beloved, it is a sight that no human eye could endure: the sight of a heart really laid bare before one's own inspection would startle us almost into insanity: but God sees the heart in all its bestial sensuousness, in all its wanderings and rebellions, in all its highmindedness and pride; God has searched and knows it altogether.

God sees all the heart's imaginations, and what they are let us not presume to tell. O children of God, these have made you cry and groan full many a time, and though the worldling groans not over them, yet he hath them. Oh, what a filthy sty of Stygian imaginations is the heart; all full of everything that is hideous, when it once begins to dance and make carnival and revelry concerning sin. But God sees the heart's imaginations.

Again, God sees the heart's devices. You perhaps, O sinner, have determined to curse God; you have not done so, but you intend to do it. He knows your devices—reads them all. You perhaps will not be permitted to run into the excess of riotousness into which you purpose to go; but your very purpose is now undergoing the inspection of the Most High. There is never a design forged in the fires of the heart, before it is beaten on the anvil of resolve, that is not known, and seen, and noted by Jehovah our God.

He knows, next, the resolves of the heart. He knows, O sinner, how many times you have resolved to repent, and have resolved and re-resolved, and then have continued the same. He knows, O thou that hast been sick, how thou didst resolve to seek God, but how thou didst despise thine own resolution, when good health had put thee beyond the temporary danger. Thy resolves have been filed in heaven, and thy broken promises, and thy vows despised, shall be brought out in their order as swift witnesses for thy condemnation. All these things are known of God. We have often had very clear proof of God's knowing what is in man's heart, even in the ministry. Some months ago, whilst standing here preaching, I deliberately pointed to a man in the midst of the crowd, and said these words—"There is a man sitting there that is a shoemaker, keeps his shop open on Sunday, had his shop open last Sabbath morning, took ninepence, and there was fourpence profit out of it. His soul is sold to Satan for fourpence." A City Missionary when going round the West end of the town, met with a poor man of whom he asked this question—"Do you know Mr. Spurgeon?" He found him reading a sermon. "Yes," he said, "I have every reason to know him; I have been to hear him, and under God's grace I have become a new man. But," said he, "shall I tell you how it was? I went to the Music Hall, and took my seat in the middle of the

place, and the man looked at me as if he knew me, and deliberately told the congregation that I was a shoemaker, and that I sold shoes on a Sunday; and I did, sir. But, sir, I should not have minded that; but he said I took ninepence the Sunday before, and that there was fourpence profit; and so I did take ninepence, and fourpence was just the profit, and how he should know that I'm sure I cannot tell. It struck me it was God had spoken to my soul through him; and I shut up my shop last Sunday, and was afraid to open it and go there, lest he should split about me again." I could tell as many as a dozen authentic stories of cases that have happened in this Hall, where I have deliberately pointed at somebody, without the slightest knowledge of the person, or ever having in the least degree any inkling or idea that what I said was right, except that I believed I was moved thereto by the Spirit; and so striking has been the description, that the persons have gone away and said, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did: he was sent of God to my soul, beyond a doubt, or else he could not have painted my case so clearly."

And not only so, but we have known cases in which the thoughts of men have been revealed from the pulpit. I have sometimes seen persons nudge with their elbow, because they have got a smart hit, and I have heard them say, when they went out, "That is just what I said to you when I went in at the door." "Ah!" says the other, "I was thinking of the very thing he said, and he told me of it." Now, if God thus proves his own Omniscience by helping his poor, ignorant servant, to state the very thing, thought and done, when he did not know it, then it must remain decisively proved that God does know everything that is secret, because we see he tells it to men, and enables them to tell it to others. Oh, ye may endeavour as much as ye can to hide your faults from God; but beyond a doubt he shall discover you. He discovers you this day. His Word is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," and "pierces to the dividing asunder of the joints and of the marrow;" and in that last day, when the book shall be opened, and he shall give to every man his sentence, then shall it be seen how exact, how careful, how precious, how personal, was God's knowledge of the heart of every man whom he had made.

4. And, now, the last question: *When?* When does God see us? The answer is, he sees us everywhere and in every place. O foolish man, who thinks to hide himself from the Most High! It is night; no human eye sees thee; the curtain is drawn, and thou art hidden. There are his eyes lowering at thee through the gloom. It is a far-off country; no one knows thee; parents and friends have been left behind, restraints are cast off. There is a Father near thee, who looks upon thee even now. It is a lone spot, and if the deed be done, no tongue shall tell it. There is a tongue in heaven that shall tell it; yea, the beam out of the wall and the stones in the field, shall raise up themselves as witnesses against thee. Canst thou hide thyself anywhere where God shall not detect thee? Is not this whole world like a glass hive, wherein we put our bees? and does not God stand and see all our motions when we think we are hidden? Ah, it is but a glass hiding place. He looketh from heaven, and through stone walls and rocks; yea, to the very centre itself, does his eye pierce, and in the thickest darkness he beholds our deeds.

Come, then, let me make a personal application of the matter, and I have done. If this be true, hypocrite, what a fool thou art! If God can read the heart, O man, what a sorry, sorry thing thy fair pretence must be! Ah! ah! ah! what a change will come over some of you! This world is a masquerade, and ye, many of you, wear the mask of religion. Ye dance your giddy hours and men think you to be the saints of God. How changed will you be, when, at the door of eternity, you must drop the vizer, and must announce the theatricals in which you live! How you will blush when the paint is washed from off your cheek—when you stand before God naked to your own shame, a hypocrite, unclean, diseased, covered up before with the gew-gaws and the trickery of pretended formality in religion, but now standing there, base, vile, and hideous! There is many a man that bears about him a cancer that would make one sick to see. Oh! how shall hypocrites look, when their cancerous hearts are laid bare! Deacon! how you will tremble when your old heart is torn open, and your vile pretences rent away! Minister! how black you will look when your surplice is off, and when your grand pretensions are cast to the dogs! How will you tremble! There will be no sermonizing others then. You yourself will be preached to, and the sermon shall be from that text, "Depart, ye cursed." O brethren, above all things shun hypocrisy. If ye

mean to be damned, make up your minds to it, and be damned, like honest men; but do not, I beseech you, pretend to go to heaven, while all the while you are going to hell. If ye mean to make your abodes in torment for ever, then serve the devil, and do not be ashamed of it; stand it right out, and let the world know what you are. But oh! never put on the cloak of religion. I beseech you, do not add to your eternal misery by being a wolf in sheep's clothing. Show the cloven foot; do not hide it. If you mean to go to hell, say so. "If God be God, serve him. If Baal be God, serve him." Do not serve Baal and then pretend to be serving God.

One other practical conclusion. If God sees and knows everything, how this ought to make you tremble—you that have lived in sin for many years! I have known a man who was once stopped from an act of sin by the fact of there being a cat in the room. He could not bear even the eyes of that poor creature to see him. Oh, I would ye could carry about with you the recollection of those eyes that are always on you. Swearer! could you swear if you could see God's eye looking at you! Thief! drunkard! harlot! could ye indulge in your sins, if ye saw his eyes on you? Oh, methinks they would startle you, and bid you pause, before ye did in God's own sight rebel against his law. There is a story told of the American War, that one of the prisoners taken by the Americans was subjected to a torture of the most refined character. He says, "I was put into a narrow dungeon; I was comfortably provided for with all I needed; but there was a round slit in the wall, and through that, both night and day, a soldier always looked at me." He says, "I could not rest, I could not eat nor drink, nor do anything in comfort, because there was always that eye—an eye that seemed never to be turned away, and never shut—always following me round that little apartment. Nothing ever hidden from it." Now take home that figure. Recollect that is your position; you are shut in by the narrow walls of time, when ye eat and when ye drink, when ye rise and when ye lie upon your beds; when ye walk the streets or when ye sit at home, that eye is always fixed upon you. Go home now and sin against God, if ye dare; go home now and break his laws to his face, and despise him, and set him at nought! Rush on your own destruction: dash yourselves against the buckler of Jehovah, and destroy yourselves upon his own sword! Nay, rather "turn ye, turn ye." Turn ye, ye that hath followed the ways of sin, turn ye to Christ, and live; and then the same Omniscience which is now your horror, shall be your pleasure. Sinner! if thou now dost pray, he seeth thee; if thou now dost weep he seeth thee. "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." It shall be even so with thee, if now thou turnest to God and dost believe in his Son Jesus Christ.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 5, 1857, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"—Galatians iii. 3.

Yes, we are just so foolish. Folly is bound up not only in the heart of a child, but in the heart of even a child of God; and though the rod may be said to bring folly out of a child, it will take many a repetition of the rod of affliction upon the shoulders of a Christian before that folly is taken out of him. I suppose we are all of us very sound as a matter of theory upon this point. If any should ask us how we hope to have our salvation worked in us, we should without the slightest hesitation aver our belief that salvation is of the Lord alone, and we should declare that, as the Holy Spirit first of all commenced our piety in us, we look alone to his might to continue and to preserve, and at last to perfect the sacred work. I say we are sound enough on that point as a matter of theory, but we are all of us very heretical and unsound as a matter of practice; for alas! you will not find a Christian who does not have to mourn over his self-righteous tendencies; you will not discover a believer who has not at certain periods in his life, to groan because the spirit of self-confidence has risen in his heart, and prevented him from feeling the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit—has led him to put his confidence in the mere strength of nature, the strength of good intentions, the strength of strong resolutions, instead of relying upon the might of God the Holy Spirit alone. This one thing I know, brethren, that whilst as a preacher I can tell you all, that the Holy Spirit must work all our works in us, and that without him we can do nothing, yet as a man I find myself tempted to deny my own preachings, not in my words, but to deny them in fact by endeavouring to do deeds without looking first to the Holy Spirit. Whilst I should never be unsound in the didactic part of it, yet in that part which concerns the working of it out, in common with all that love the Lord Jesus, but who are still subject to the infirmities of flesh and blood, I have to groan that I repeatedly find myself, having begun in the Spirit, seeking to be made perfect in the flesh. Yes, we are just as foolish as that; and my brethren, it is well for us if we have a consciousness that we are foolish, for when a man is foolish and knows it, there is the hope that he will one day be wise: to know one's-self to be foolish is to stand upon the doorstep of the temple of wisdom; to understand the wrongness of any position is half way towards amending it; to be quite sure that our self-confidence is a heinous sin and folly, and an offence towards God, and to have that thought burned into us by God's Holy Spirit, is going a great length towards the absolute casting

our self-confidence away, and the bringing of our souls in practice, as well as in theory, to rely wholly upon the power of God's Holy Spirit.

This evening, however, I shall run away from my text somewhat. Having just in a few words endeavoured to explain the meaning of the whole sentence, I intend only this evening to dwell upon *the doctrine which incidentally the apostle teaches us*. He teaches us that we begin in the Spirit—"Having begun in the Spirit." I have already illustrated the whole text sufficiently for our understanding if God the Holy Spirit shall enlighten us; and I shall now, I say, confine myself to the thought that Christians begin in the Spirit; that the early part of Christianity is of God's Spirit, and of God's Spirit only, while it is equally true that all the way through we must lean upon the same power and depend upon the same strength. And I have selected this text for this reason: we have a very large influx of young believers, month after month—week after week I may say, for every week we receive additions to the church to a considerable number, and month after month these hands baptize into a profession of faith of the Lord Jesus many of those who are yet young in the faith of the Gospel. Now I am astonished to find those persons that thus come before me so well instructed in the doctrines of grace and so sound in all the truths of the covenant, inasmuch that I may think it my boast and glory, in the name of Jesus, that I know not that we have any members, whom we have received into the church, who do not give their full assent and consent unto all the doctrines of the Christian religion, commonly called Calvinistic doctrines. Those which men are wont to laugh at as being high doctrinal points, are those which they most readily receive, believe, and rejoice in. I find, however, that the greatest deficiency lies in this point, forgetfulness of the work of the Holy Spirit. I find them very easily remembering the work of God the Father; they do not deny the great doctrine of election; they can see clearly the great sentence of justification passed by the Father upon the elect through the vicarious sacrifice and perfect righteousness of Jesus; and they are not backward in understanding the work of Jesus either: they can see how Christ was the substitute for his people and stood in their room, place and stead; nor do they for one moment impugn any doctrine concerning God's Spirit; but they are not clear upon the point: they can talk upon the other points better than they can upon those which more particularly concern the blessed work of that all-adorable person of the Godhead, God the Holy Spirit. I thought, therefore, that I would just preach as simply as ever I could upon the work of the Holy Spirit, and begin at the beginning; hoping on succeeding evenings, at different times, as God the Holy Spirit shall guide me, to enter more fully into the subject of the work of the Spirit from the beginning even to the end. But let me say, it is no use your expecting me to preach a course of sermons. I know a great deal better than that. I don't believe God the Holy Spirit ever intended men to publish three months before hand, lists of sermons that they were going to preach; because there always will arise changes in Providence, and different states of mind both in the preacher and the hearer, and he will be a very wise man who has got an Old Moore's Almanack correct enough to let him know what would be the best sort of sermon to preach three months ahead. He had better leave it to his God to give him in the same hour what he shall speak, and look for his sermons, as the Israelites looked for the manna, day by day. However, we now commence by endeavouring to narrate the different points of the Spirit's work in the beginning of salvation.

And first, let me start by asserting that **THE COMMENCEMENT OF SALVATION IS THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK**. Salvation is not begun in the soul by *the means of grace* apart from the Holy Spirit. No man in the world is at liberty to neglect the means that God has appointed. If a house be builded for prayer, that man must expect

no blessing who neglects to treat its floor. If a pulpit be erected for the ministration of the Word, no man must expect (although we do sometimes get more than we expect) to be saved except by the hearing of the Word. If the Bible be printed in our own native language, and we can read it, he who neglecteth Holy Scripture, and ceaseth from its study, has lost one great and grand opportunity of being blessed. There are many means of grace, and let us speak as highly of them as ever we can; we would be far from depreciating them; they are of the highest value; blessed are the people who have them; happy is the nation which is blessed with the means of grace. But my brethren, no man was ever saved by the means of grace apart from the Holy Spirit. You may hear the sermons of the man whom God delighteth to honour; ye may select from all your puritanical divines the writings of the man whom God did bless with a double portion of his Holy Spirit; ye may attend every meeting for prayer; ye may turn over the leaves of this blessed book; but in all this, there is no life for the soul apart from the breath of the Divine Spirit. Use these means, we exhort you to use them, and use them diligently: but recollect that in none of these means is there anything that can benefit you unless God the Holy Spirit shall own and crown them. These are like the conduit pipes of the market place; when the fountain-head floweth with water then they are full, and we do derive a blessing from them; but if the stream be stayed, if the fountain-head doth cease to give forth its current, then these are wells without water, clouds without rain; and ye may go to ordinances as an Arab turns to his skin bottle when it is dry, and with your parched lips ye may suck the wind and drink the whirlwind, but receive neither comfort, nor blessing, nor instruction, from the means of grace.

Nor is the salvation of any sinner commenced in him by *a minister or by a priest*. God forgive the man that ever called himself a priest, or suffered anyone else to call him so since the days of our Lord Jesus. The other morning at family prayer, I read the case of King Uzziah, who, having the kingly office, must needs thrust himself into the tabernacle of the Lord, and take the place of the priests. You remember how the priests withstood him, and said, "This is not thy portion, O Uzziah;" and you remember how he seized the censer and would burn incense as a priest before the Lord God; and whilst they yet spake, lo! the leprosy did rise in his face and he went out a leper, as white as snow, from the house of God. Ah! my brethren, it is no mean offence against God for any man to call himself a priest; not but that all the saints have a priestly office through Christ Jesus; but when any man putteth to the idea a speciality as applicable to himself above his fellows, and claimeth to be a priest among men, he committeth a sin before God, which, even though it be a sin of ignorance, is indeed great and grievous, and leadeth unto divers great and deadly errors, the guilt of which must lie partly upon the head of the man who gave foot-hold for those errors by allowing the title to be applied to himself. Well, there is no man—call him priest if you like, by way of ill courtesy—that can begin the work with us—no, not in the use of the ceremony. The Papist may tell us, and the Papist masked,—the devil in white, the Puseyite,—may tell us that grace begins in the heart at the dropping of the water upon the child's brow; but he telleth a lie, a lie before God, that hath not even so much as the shadow of truth to justify the liar. There is no power in man, though he were ordained by one who could most assuredly claim succession from the apostles—though he were endowed with miraculous gifts, though he were the apostle Paul himself—if he did assert that he had in himself power to convert, power to regenerate, let him be accursed, for he hath denied the truth and Paul himself would have declared him anathema, maranatha, for having departed from the everlasting gospel, one cardinal point of which is—regeneration, the work of God the Holy Spirit; the new birth, a thing that is from above.

And, my brethron, it is quite certain that *no man ever begins the new birth himself*. The work of salvation never was commenced by any man. God the Holy Spirit must commence it. Now, the reasons why no man ever commenced the work of grace in his own heart, is very plain and palpable. First, because he cannot; secondly, because he won't. The best reason of all is, because he cannot—he is dead. Well, the dead may be made alive, but the dead cannot make themselves alive, for the dead can do nothing. Besides, the new thing to be created as yet hath no being. The uncreated cannot create. "Nay," but you say, "that man can create." Yes, can hell create heaven? Then sin may create grace. What! will you tell me that fallen human nature, that has come almost to a level with the brutes, is competent to rival God; that it can emulate the divinity in working as great marvels, and in imparting as divine a life as even God himself can give? It cannot. Besides, it is a creation; we are *created* anew in Christ Jesus. Let any man create a fly, and afterwards let him create a new heart in himself; until he hath done the less he cannot do the greater. Besides, *no man will*. If any man could convert himself, there is no man that would. If any man saith he would, if that be true, he is already converted; for the will to be converted is in great part conversion. The will to love God, the desire to be in unison with Christ, is not to be found in any man who hath not already been brought to be reconciled with God through the death of his Son. There may be a false desire, a desire grounded upon a misrepresentation of the truth; but a true desire after true salvation by the true Spirit, is a certain index that the salvation already is there in the germ and in the bud, and only needeth time and grace to develope itself. But certain it is, that man neither can nor will, being on the one hand utterly impotent and dead, and on the other hand utterly depraved and unwilling; hating the change when he sees it in others, and most of all despising it in himself. Be certain, therefore, that God the Holy Spirit must begin, since none else can do so.

And now, my brethren, I must just enter into the subject very briefly, by showing what the Holy Spirit does in the beginning. Permit me to say, that in describing the work, the true work of salvation in the soul, you must not expect me to exhibit any critical nicety of judgment. We have heard of an assembly of divines, who once debated whether men did repent first or believe first; and after a long discussion, some one wiser than the rest suggested another question, whether in the new-born child the lungs did first heave, or the blood did first circulate. "Now," said he, "when you shall ascertain the one, you may be able to ascertain the other." You shall not know which cometh first; they are, very likely, begotten in us at the same moment. We are not able, when we mention these things in order, exactly to declare and testify that these do all happen according to the order in which we mention them; but we only, according to the judgment of men, according to our own experience, seek now to set forth what is the usual way of acting with God the Holy Spirit in the work of salvation.

The first thing, then, that God the Holy Spirit doth in the soul is, to *regenerate* it. We must always learn to distinguish between regeneration and conversion. A man may be converted a great many times in his life, but regenerated only once. Conversion is a thing which is caused by regeneration, but regeneration is the very first act of God the Spirit in the soul. "What," say you, "does regeneration come before conviction of sin?" Most certainly; there could be no conviction in the dead sinner. Now, regeneration quickens the sinner, and makes him live. He is not competent to have true spiritual conviction worked in him until, first of all, he has received life. It is true that one of the earliest developments of life is conviction of sin; but before any man can see his need of a Saviour he must be a living man; before he can really, I mean, in a spiritual position, in a saving, effectual manner, understand his own deep depravity, he must have eyes with

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

which to see the depravity, he must have ears with which to hear the sentence of the law, he must have been quickened and made alive; otherwise he could not be capable of feeling, or seeing, or discerning at all. I believe, then, the first thing the Spirit does is this—he finds the sinner dead in sin, just where Adam left him; he breathes into him a divine influence. The sinner knows nothing about how it is done, nor do any of us understand it. “Thou understandest not the wind—it bloweth where it listeth;” but we see its effects. Now, none of us can tell how the Holy Spirit works in men. I doubt not there have been some who have sat in these pews, and in the middle of a sermon, or in prayer, or singing—they knew not how it was—the Spirit of God was in their hearts; he had entered into their souls; they were no longer dead in sin, no longer without thought, without hope, without spiritual capacity, but they had begun to live. And I believe this work of regeneration, when it is done effectually—and God the Spirit would not do it without doing it effectually—is done mysteriously, often suddenly, and it is done in divers manners; but still it hath always this mark about it—that the man, although he may not understand how it is done, feels that something is done. The what, the how, he doth not know; but he knows that something is done; and he now begins to think thoughts he never thought before; he begins to feel as he never felt before; he is brought into a new state, there is a change wrought in him—as if a dead post standing in the street were on a sudden to find itself possessed of a soul, and did hear the sound of the passing carriages, and listen to the words of the foot-passengers; there is something quite new about it. The fact is, the man has got a spirit; he never had one before; he was nothing but a body and a soul; but now God has breathed into him the third great principle, the new life, the Spirit, and he has become a spiritual man. Now, he is not only capable of mental exercise, but of spiritual exercise; as, having a soul before, he could repent, he could believe, as a mere mental exercise; he could think thoughts of God, and have some desires after him; but he could not have one spiritual thought, nor one spiritual wish or desire, for he had no powers that could educe these things; but now, in regeneration, he has got something given to him, and being given, you soon see its effects. The man begins to feel that he is a sinner; why did he not feel that before? Ah, my brethren, he could not, he was not in a state to feel he was a dead sinner; and though he used to tell you, and tell God, by way of compliment, that he was a sinner, he did not know anything about it. He said he was a sinner; yes, but he talked about being a sinner just as the blind man talks about the stars that he has never seen, as he talks about the light, the existence of which he would not know unless he were told of it; but now it is a deep reality. You may laugh at him, ye who have not been regenerated; but now he has got something that really puts him beyond your laughter. He begins to feel the exceeding weight and evil of transgression; his heart trembles, his very flesh quivers—in some cases the whole frame is affected. The man is sick by day and night; his flesh creepeth on his bones for fear; he cannot eat, his appetite fails him. He cannot bear the sound of melody and mirth; all his animal spirits are dried up. He cannot rejoice; he is unhappy, he is miserable, downcast, distressed; in some cases, almost ready to go mad; though in the majority of cases it takes a lighter phase, and there are the gentle whispers of the Spirit; but even then, the pangs and pains caused by regeneration, while the new life discovers the sin and evil of the past condition of the man, are things that are not to be well described or mentioned without tears. This is all the work of the Spirit.

And having brought the soul thus far, the next thing the Holy Spirit doth is, *to teach the soul that it is utterly incapable of saving itself.* It knew that before, mayhap, if the man sat under a Gospel ministry; but he only knew it with the ear, and understood it with the mind. Now, it has become part of his very life;

he feels it; it has entered into his soul, and he knows it to be true. Once he thought he would be good, and thought that would save him; the Holy Spirit just knocks the brains out of that thought. "Then," he says, "I will try ceremonies and see whether I cannot gain merit so;" God the Holy Spirit shoots the arrow right through the heart of that thought, and it falls dead before him, and he cannot bear the sight of the carcase, so that, like Abraham said of Sarah, he exclaims, "Bury the dead out of my sight." Though once he loved it dearly, now he hates the sight thereof. He thought once that he could believe; he had an Arminian notion in his head, that he could believe when he liked, and repent when he liked. Now, God the Spirit has brought him in such a condition, that he says, "I can do nothing." He begins to discover his own death, now that he is made alive; he did not know anything about it before. He now finds that he has no hand of faith to lift, though the minister tells him to do it. He now discovers, when he is bidden to pray, that he would, but cannot pray. He now finds that he is powerless, and he lies in the hand of God like clay in the hand of the potter, and is made to cry out, "O Lord, my God, unless thou save me, I am damned to all eternity; for I cannot lift a finger in this matter until thou first of all givest me strength." And if you urge him to do anything, he longs to be doing, but he is so afraid that it should only be fleshly doings, and not the doings of the Spirit, that he meditates, and stops, and stays, until he groans and cries; and feeling that these groans and cries are the real work of the Spirit, and prove that he has spiritual life, he then begins in right earnest to look to Jesus Christ the Saviour. But mark, all these things are by the Spirit, and none of them can ever be produced in the soul of any man or woman, apart from the divine influence of God the Holy Ghost.

This being done, the soul being now weaned from all confidence, and despairing and brought to its last standing place, yea, laid prostrate on the ground, the rope being about its neck, and the ashes and sackcloth on its head; God the Holy Ghost *went applies the blood of Jesus to the soul*, gives the soul the grace of faith whereby it lays hold of Jesus, and gives it an anointing of holy consolation and unction of assurance, whereby, casting itself wholly on the blood and righteousness of Jesus, it receiveth joy, knoweth itself to be saved, and rejoiceth in pardon. But mark, that is the work of the Spirit. Some preachers will tell their people, "Believe, only believe." Yes, it is right they should tell them so; but they should remember it is also right to tell them that even this must be the work of the Spirit; for though we say, "Only believe," that is the greatest *only* in the world; and what some men say is so easy is just what those who want to believe find to be the hardest thing in all the world. It is simple enough for a man that hath the Spirit in him to believe, when he hath the written Word before him and the witness of the Spirit in him; that is easy enough. But for the poor, tried sinner, who cannot see anything in the Word of God but thunder and threatening—for him to believe—ah, my brethren, it is not such a little matter as some make it to be. It needs the fulness of the power of God's Spirit to bring any man to such faith as that.

Well, when the sinner hath thus believed, then the Holy Spirit *bringeth all the precious things to him*. There is the blood of Jesus; that can never save my soul, unless God the Spirit takes that blood, and sprinkles it upon my conscience. There is the perfect spotless righteousness of Jesus; it is a robe that will fit me and adorn me from head to foot, but it is no use to me till I have put it on; and I cannot put it on myself; God the Holy Spirit must put the robe of Jesus' righteousness on me. There is the covenant of adoption, whereby God gives me the privileges of a son; but I cannot rejoice in my adoption until I receive the spirit of adoption whereby I may be able to cry, "Abba, Father." So, beloved, you see—I might enlarge, but my time fails me—you see that every point that is brought out in the experience of the new-born Christian, every point in that part of salvation which we may call its

beginning in the soul, has to do with God the Holy Spirit. There is no step that can be taken without him, there is nothing which can be accomplished aright without him; yea, though ye had the best of means, the rightest of ceremonies, the most orthodox of truths, and though ye did exercise your minds upon all these things, and though the blood of Jesus Christ were shed for you, and God himself had ordained you from before the foundations of the world to be saved, yet still there must be that one link always inserted in the golden chain of the plan of salvation; for without that it were all incomplete. You must be quickened by the Spirit; you must be called out of darkness into light; you must be made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Now, I wonder how many of you know anything about this. That is the practical part of it. Now my hearer, dost thou understand this? Perhaps, sir, thou art one exceeding wise, and thou turnest on thy heel with a sneer, and thou sayest "Supernaturalism in one of its phases; these Methodists are always talking about supernatural things." You are very wise, exceeding so, doubtless; but it seemeth to me that Nicodemus of old had gotten as far as you, and you have gotten no farther than he; for he asked "How could a man be born again when he is old?" And though every Sunday-school child has had a smile at the expense of Nicodemus's ignorance, you are not wiser. And yet you are a Rabbi, sir, and you would teach us, would you? And you would teach us about these things, and yet you sneer about supernaturalism. Well, the day may come—I pray it may come to you before the day of your death and your doom—when the Christ of the supernaturalists will be the only Christ for you; when you shall come into the floods of death, where you shall need something more than nature, then you will be crying for a work that is supernatural within your hearts; and it may be that then, when you first of all awake to know that your wisdom was but one of the methods of madness, you may perhaps have to cry in vain, having for your only answer, "I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded; I also will mock at your calamity, and laugh when your fear cometh."

I hear another of you say, "Well, sir, I know nothing of this work of God the Holy Spirit, in my heart; I am just as good as other people, I never make a profession of religion; it is very rarely that I go into a place of worship at all, but I am as good as the saints, any of them: look at some of them—very fine fellows certainly." Stop, now, religion is a thing between yourself and your Maker, and you have nothing to do with those very fine fellows you have spoken of. Suppose I make a confession that a large number of those who are called saints deserve a great deal more to be called sinners double-dyed, and then white-washed, —suppose I make a confession of that, what has that to do with you? Your religion must be for yourself, and it must be between you and your God. If all the world were hypocrites, that would not exonerate you before your God. When you came before the Master, if you were still at enmity to him, could you venture to plead such an excuse as this—"All the world was full of hypocrites?" "Well," he would say, "what had that to do with you? so much the more reason why you should have been a honest man. If you say the church was thus drifting away upon the quicksands, through the evil conduct and folly of the members thereof, so much the more reason why you should have helped to make it sound, if you thought you could have done so." Another cries, "Well, I do not see that I need it; I am as moral a man as I can be; I never break the Sabbath; I am one of the most punctillious of Christians; I always go to church twice a Sabbath; I hear a thoroughly evangelical minister, and you would not find fault with him." Or perhaps says another, "I go to a Baptist chapel, I am always found there, I am scrupulously correct in my conduct; I am a good father, a good husband; I do not know that any man can find fault with me in business." Well certainly that is

very good, and if you will be so good to-morrow morning as to go into Saint Paul's and wash one of those statues till you make it alive, then you will be saved by your morality; but since you, even you, are dead in trespasses and sins, without the Spirit you may wash yourself never so clean, but you cannot wash life into you any more than those statues, by all your washing, could be made to walk, or think, or breathe. You must be quickened by the Holy Spirit, for you are dead in trespasses and sins.

Yes, my comely maiden, thou that art everything excellent; thou that art not to be blamed in aught; thou that art affectionate, tender, kind, and dutiful; whose very life seems to be so pure, that all who see thee think thou seemest an angel; even thou, except thou be born again, canst not see the kingdom of God; the golden gate of heaven must grind upon its hinges with a doleful sound and shut thee out for ever, unless thou art the subject of a divine change, for this knows no exception. And, O ye vilest of the vile, ye who have wandered farthest from the paths of rectitude, "ye must be born again," ye must be quickened by a divine life; and it is comforting for you to recollect, that the very same power which can quicken the moral man, which can save the man of rectitude and honesty, is able to work in you, is able to change you; to turn the lion to a lamb, the raven to a dove.

O my hearers, ask yourselves, are you the subjects of this change? And if you be, rejoice with joy unspeakable, for happy is that mother's child, and full of glory, that can say, "I am born of God;" blessed is that man: God and the holy angels call him blessed who hath received the quickening of the Spirit, and is born of God. For him there may be many troubles, but there is "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" to counterbalance all his woe; for him there may be wars and fightings; but let him tarry, there are trumpets of victory, there are better wreaths than the laurels of conquerors, there is a crown of immortal glory, there is bliss unfading, there is acceptance in the breast of God for aye, and perpetual fellowship with Jehovah. But oh! if thou be not born again this night, I can but tremble for thee, and lift my heart in prayer to God, and pray for thee, that he may now by his Divine Spirit make thee alive, give thee to know thy need of him, and then direct thee to the cross of Jesus. But if thou knowest thy need of a Saviour to-night, if thou art this night conscious of thy death in sin, hear me preach the gospel and I have done. The Lord Jesus Christ died for you. Dost thou know thyself to be guilty, not as the hypocrite pretendeth to know it, but dost thou know it consciously, sensitively, dost thou weep over it? Dost thou lament it? Dost thou feel that thou canst not save thyself? Art thou sick of all fleshly ways of saving? Canst thou say to-night, "Unless God shall put out the hand of his mercy, I know I deserve to be lost for ever, and I am?" Then, as the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, my Master bought you with his blood, and those whom he bought with blood he will have; from the fangs of the lion and the jaws of the bear will he pluck them. He will save thee, for thou art a part of his bloody purchase; he has taken thy sins upon his head; he suffered in thy room and place; he has been punished for thee; thou shalt not die; "thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven," and I am the Master's glad herald to tell thee to night what his Word tells thee also, that thou mayest rejoice in the fulness of faith, for "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance."

May the Lord now be pleased to add his blessing for Jesus' sake.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 21, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."—1 Timothy i. 15.

I suppose that the message delivered by God's servants to the people must always be called "the burden of the Lord." When the old prophets came forth from their Master, they had such dooms, and threatenings, and lamentations, and woe to preach, that their countenances were wan with sorrow, and their hearts heavy within them. They usually commenced their discourses by announcing, "The burden of the Lord, the burden of the Lord." But now, our message is no heavy one. No threatenings and no thunders compose the theme of the gospel minister. All is mercy; love is the sum and substance of our gospel—love undeserved; love to the very chief of sinners. But it is still a burden to us. So far as the matter of our preaching is concerned, it is our joy and our delight to preach it; but if others feel as I feel now, they will all acknowledge it to be a hard matter to preach the gospel. For now I am sore vexed, and my heart is troubled, not concerning what I have to preach, but how I shall preach it. What if so good a message should fail because of so ill an ambassador? What if my hearers should reject this saying which is worthy of all acceptation, because I may announce it with lack of earnestness? Surely—surely such a supposition is enough to draw the tears to the eyes of any man! But may God in his mercy prevent a consummation so fearfully to be dreaded; and, however I may now preach, may this Word of God commend itself to every man's conscience; and may many of you now gathered together, who have never as yet fled to Jesus for refuge, by the simple preaching of the Word, now be persuaded to come in, that you may taste and see that the Lord is good.

Our text is one that pride would never prompt a man to select. It is quite impossible to flourish about it, it is so simple. Human nature is apt to cry, "Well, I cannot preach upon that text—it is too plain; there is no mystery in it; I cannot show my learning: it is just a plain, common-sense announcement—I scarcely would wish to take it, for it lowers the man, however much it may exalt the Master." So, expect nothing but the text from me this morning, and the simplest possible explanation of it.

We shall have two heads: first there is *the text*; then there is a *double commendation* appended to the text—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation."

I. First, there is *THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE TEXT*—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." In that there are three things very prominent. There is *the Saviour*, there is *the sinner*, and there is *the salvation*.

1. There is, first of all, *the Saviour*. And in explaining the Christian religion, this is where we must begin. The person of the Saviour is the foundation-stone of our hope. Upon that person depends the usefulness of our gospel. Should some

one arise and preach a Saviour, who was a mere man, he would be unworthy of our hopes, and the salvation preached would be inadequate to what we need. Should another preach salvation by an angel, our sins are so heavy that an angelic atonement would have been insufficient; and therefore his gospel totters to the ground. I repeat it, upon the person of the Saviour rests the whole of the salvation. If he be not able, if he be not commissioned to perform the work, then, indeed, the work itself is worthless to us, and falls short of its design. But, men and brethren, when we preach the gospel, we need not stop and stammer. We have to show you this day such a Saviour that earth and heaven could not show his fellow. He is one so loving, so great, so mighty, and so well adapted to all our needs, that it is evident enough that he was prepared of old to meet our deepest wants. We know that Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners was God; and that long before his descent to this lower world, he was adored by angels as the Son of the Highest. When we preach the Saviour to you, we tell you that although Jesus Christ was the Son of man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, yet was he eternally the Son of God, and hath in himself all the attributes which constitute perfect Godhead. What more of a Saviour can any man want than God? Is not he who made the heavens able to purge the soul? If he of old stretched the curtains of the skies, and made the earth, that man should dwell upon it, is he not able to rescue a sinner from the destruction that is to come? When we tell you he is God, we have at once declared his omnipotence and his infinity; and when these two things work together, what can be impossible? Let God undertake a work, it cannot meet with failure. Let him enter into an enterprise, and it is sure of its accomplishment. Since, then, Christ Jesus the man was also Christ Jesus the God, in announcing the Saviour, we have the fullest confidence that we are offering you something that is worthy of all acceptance.

The name given to Christ suggests something concerning his person. He is called in our text, "Christ Jesus." The two words mean, the "Anointed Saviour." The Anointed Saviour "came into the world to save sinners."

Pause here, my soul, and read this o'er again:—He is the anointed Saviour. God the Father from before all worlds anointed Christ to the office of a Saviour of men; and, therefore, when I behold my Redeemer coming from heaven to redeem man from sin, I note that he does not come unsent, or uncommissioned. He has his Father's authority to back him in his work. Hence, there are two immutable things whereon our soul may rest;—there is the person of Christ, divine in itself; there is the anointing from on high, giving to him the stamp of a commission received from Jehovah his Father. O sinner, what greater Saviour dost thou want than he whom God anointed? What more canst thou require than the eternal Son of God to be thy ransom, and the anointing of the Father to be the ratification of the treaty?

Yet we have not fully described the person of the Redeemer, until we have noted that *he was man*. We read that he came into the world; by which coming into the world we do not understand his usual coming; for he often came into the world before. We read in Scripture, "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know." In fact, he is always here. The goings of God are to be seen in the sanctuary: both in providence and in nature they are to be seen most visibly. Does not God visit the earth when he makes the tempest his chariot, and rides upon the wings of the wind? But this visitation was different from all these. Christ came into the world in the sense of the fullest and most complete union with human nature. Oh, sinner, when we preach a Divine Saviour, perhaps the name of God is so terrible to thee, that thou canst scarcely think the Saviour is adapted to thee. But hear thou again the old story. Although Christ was the Son of God, he left his highest throne in glory and stooped to the manger. There he is, an infant of a span long. See, he grows from boyhood up to manhood, and he comes forth into the world to preach and suffer! See him as he groans under the yoke of oppression; he is mocked and despised; his visage more marred than that of any other man, and his form more than the sons of men! See him in the garden, as he sweats drops of blood! See him in Pilate's chamber, in which he is scourged and his shoulders run with gore! On the bloody tree behold him! See him dying with agony too exquisite to be imagined, much less to be described! Behold him in the silent tomb! See him at last bursting the bonds of death, and rising the third day, and afterwards ascending up on high, "leading captivity

captive!" Sinner, thou hast now the Saviour before thee, plainly manifested. He who was called Jesus of Nazareth, who died upon the cross, who had his superscription written, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," this man was the Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Father, "begotten by his Father before all worlds, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father." He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Oh, could I bring him before you, could I now bring him here to show you his hands and his side, if ye could now, like Thomas, put your fingers in the holes of the nails, and thrust your hand into his side, methinks you would not be faithless, but believing. This much I know, if there be anything that can make men believe under the hand of God's most Holy Spirit, it is a true picture of the person of Christ. Seeing is believing in his case. A true view of Christ, a right-looking at him, will most assuredly beget faith in the soul. Oh, I doubt not if ye knew my Master, some of you who are now doubting, and fearing, and trembling, would say, "Oh, I can trust him; a person so divine, and yet so human, ordained and anointed of God, must be worthy of my faith, I can trust him; nay more, if I had a hundred souls I could trust him with them all; or, if I stood accountable for all the sins of all mankind, and were myself the very reservoir and sink of this world's infamy, I could trust him even then—for such a Saviour must be "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." This, then, is the person of the Saviour.

2. Now, the second point is *the sinner*. If we had never heard this passage before, or any of similar import, I can suppose that the most breathless silence would reign over this place if for the first time I should commence to read them in your hearing, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save—" I know how you would thrust forward your heads; I know how you would put your hand against your ear, and look as if you would hear with the eye as well as with the ear, to know for whom the Saviour died. Every heart would say, whom did he come to save? And if we had never heard the message before, how would our hearts palpitate with fear lest the character described should be one unto which it would be impossible for us to attain! Oh, how pleasant it is to hear again that one word which describes the character of those Christ came to save:—"He came into the world to save *sinners*." Monarch, there is here no distinction; princes, he hath not singled you out to be the objects of his love; but beggars and the poor shall taste his grace. Ye learned men, ye masters of Israel, Christ does not say he came specially to save you; the unlearned and illiterate peasant is equally welcome to his grace. Jew, with all thy pedigree of honour, thou art not justified more than the Gentile. Men of Britain, with all your civilization and your freedom, Christ does not say he came to save you: he names not you as the distinguishing class who are the objects of his love—no, and ye that have good works, and reckon yourselves saints among men, he doth not distinguish you either. The one simple title, large and broad as humanity itself, is simply this:—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Now, mark, we are to understand this in a general sense when we read it, viz., that all whom Jesus came to save are sinners; but if any man asks, may I infer from this that I am saved; we must then put another question to him. To begin then, with the general sense:—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." The men whom Christ came to save were by nature sinners, nothing less and nothing more than sinners. I have often said that Christ came into the world to save *awakened* sinners. It is quite true; so he did. But those sinners were not awakened sinners when he came to save them; they were nothing but "sinners dead in trespasses and sins" when he came to them. It is a common notion that we are to preach that Christ died to save what are called sensible sinners. Now that is true; but they were not sensible sinners when Christ died to save them. He makes them sensible or feeling sinners, as the effect of his death. Those he died for are described, without any adjective to diminish the breadth of it, as being sinners, and simply sinners, without any badge of merit or mark of goodness which could distinguish them above their fellows. Sinners! Now, the term includes some of all kinds of sinners. There are some men whose sins appear but little. Trained up religiously, and educated

in a moral way, they do not dash into the deeps of sin; they are content to coast along the shores of vice—they do not launch out into the depths. Now, Christ hath died for such as these, for many of these have been brought to know and love him. Let no man think, because he is a less sinner than others, that therefore there is less hope for him. Strange it is that some have often thought that. "If I had been a blasphemer," says one, "or injurious, I could have had more hope; though I know I have sinned greatly in my own eyes, yet so little have I erred in the eye of the world, that I can scarcely think myself included." Oh, say not so. It says, "Sinners." If thou canst put thyself in that catalogue, whether it be at the top or at the bottom, thou art still within it; and the truth still holds good that those Jesus came to save were originally sinners, and thou being such, thou hast no reason to believe that thou art shut out. Again, Christ died to save sinners of an opposite sort. We have some men whom we dare not describe; it would be a shame to speak of the things which are done by them in private. There have been men who have invented vices of which the devil himself was ignorant until they invented them. There have been men so beastial that the very dog was a more honourable creature than they. We have heard of beings whose crimes have been more diabolical, more detestable, than any action ascribed even to the devil himself. Yet my text does not shut out these. Have we not met with blasphemers so profane that they could not speak without an oath? Blasphemy, which at first was something terrible to them, has now become so common that they would curse themselves before they said their prayers, and swear when they were singing God's praises. It has come to be part of their meat and drink, a thing so natural to them that the very sinfulness of it does not shock them, they so continually do it. As for God's laws, they delight to know them for the mere sake of breaking them. Tell them of a new vice and you will please them. They have become like that Roman emperor whose parasites could never please him better than by inventing some new crime—men who have gone head over ears in the Stygian gulf of hellish sin—men, who not content with fouling their feet while walking through the mire have lifted up the trap-door with which we seal down depravity, and have dived into the very kennel,—reveling in the very filth of human iniquity. But there is nothing in my text which can exclude even these. Many of these shall yet be washed in the Saviour's blood, and be made partakers of the Saviour's love.

Nor does this text make a distinction as to the age of sinners. I see many among you here whose hairs if they were the colour of your character would be the very reverse of what they are; ye have become white without, but ye are blackened all within with sin. Ye have added layer to layer of crime; and, now, if one were to dig down through the various deposits of numerous years, he would discover stony relics of youthful sins, hidden down in the depths of your rocky hearts. Where once all was tender, everything has become sere and hardened. You have gone far into sin. If you were to be converted now, would it not, indeed, be a wonder of grace? For the old oak to be bent, oh, how hard! Now, that it has grown so rugged and tough, can it be bent? Can the Great Husbandman train it? Can he graft on so old and so rough a stem something that shall bring forth heavenly fruit? Ah, he can, for age is not mentioned in the text, and many of the most ancient of men have proved the love of Jesus in their latest years. "But," says one, "my sin has had peculiar aggravations connected with it. I have sinned against light and against knowledge. I have trampled on a mother's prayers; I have despoiled a father's tears. Warnings given to me have been neglected. On my sick bed God himself has rebuked me. My resolves have been frequent and are frequently forgotten. As for my guilt, it is not to be measured by any ordinary standard. My little crimes are greater than other men's deepest iniquities, for I have sinned against the light, against the prickings of conscience, and against everything that should have taught me better." Well, my friend, I do not see that thou art shut out here; my text makes no distinction but just this;—"Sinners!" And as far as my text is concerned there is no limit whatever: I must deal with the text as it stands; and even for you I cannot consent to limit it; it says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." There have been men of your sort saved; why, then, should you not be saved? There have been the grossest blackguards, and the vilest thieves, and the most debauched harlots saved; then, why not you, even if you be such as they are? Sinners a hundred years old have been saved; we have instances on record of such cases; then, why

not you? If from one of God's instances we may generally infer a rule, and if, moreover, we have his own Word to back us, where lives the man who is so wickedly arrogant as to shut himself out, and close the door of mercy in his own face? No, beloved, the text says "Sinner;" and why should it not include you and me within its list? "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

But I said, and I must return to it, if any-one wishes to make a particular application of the text to his own case, it is necessary he should read this text in another way. Every man in this place must not infer that Christ came to save him. Those whom Christ came to save were sinners; but Christ will not save all sinners. There are some sinners who undoubtedly will be lost, because they reject Christ. They despise him; they will not repent; they choose their own self-righteousness; they do not turn to Christ; they will have none of his ways and none of his love. For such sinners, there is no promise of mercy, for there remains no other way of salvation. Despise Christ, and you despise your own mercy. Turn away from him, and you have proved that in his blood there is no efficacy for you. Despise him, and die doing so, die without giving your soul into his hands, and you have given a most awful proof that though the blood of Christ was mighty, yet never was it applied to you, never was it sprinkled on your hearts to the taking away of your sins. If, then, I want to know did Christ so die for me that I may now believe in him, and feel myself to be a saved man, I must answer this question:—Do I *feel* to-day that I am a sinner? Not, do I *say* so, as a compliment, but do I *feel* it? In my inmost soul is that a truth printed in great capitals of burning fire—I am a sinner? Then, if it be so, Christ died for me; I am included in his special purpose. The covenant of grace includes my name in the ancient roll of eternal election; there my person is recorded, and I shall, without a doubt, be saved, if now, feeling myself to be a sinner, I cast myself upon that simple truth, believing it and trusting in it to be my sheet anchor in every time of trouble. Come, man and brother, are you not prepared to trust in him. Are not many of you able to say that you feel yourself sinners? Oh, I beseech you, whoever you are, believe this great truth which is worthy of all acceptance—Christ Jesus came to save you. I know your doubts; I know your fears, for I have suffered them myself; and the only way whereby I can keep my hopes alive is just this:—I am brought every day to the cross; I believe that to my dying hour I shall never have any hope but this—

"Nothing in my hands I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling."

And my only reason at this hour for believing Jesus Christ is my Redeemer is just this:—I know that I am a *sinner*: this I feel, and over this I mourn; and though I mourn it much, when Satan tells me that I cannot be the Lord's, I draw from my very mourning the comfortable inference, that inasmuch as he has made me feel I am lost, he would not have done this if he had not intended to save me; and inasmuch as he has given me to see that I belong to that great class of characters whom he came to save, I infer from that, beyond a doubt, that he will save me. Oh, can you do the same, ye sin stricken, weary, sad, and disappointed souls, to whom the world has become an empty thing? Ye weary spirits who have gone your round of pleasure, now exhausted with satiety, or even with disease, are longing to be rid of it—oh, ye spirits that are looking for something better than this mad world can ever give you here, I preach to you the blessed Gospel of the blessed God:—Jesus Christ the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, and raised again the third day to save you—even you, for he came into the world to save sinners.

3. And, now, very briefly, the third point: What is meant by *saving* sinners? "Christ came to save sinners." Brethren, if you want a picture to show you what is meant by being saved, let me give it to you here. There is a poor wretch who has lived many a year in the grossest sin; so inured to sin has he become, that the Ethiopian might sooner change his skin than he could learn to do well. Drunkenness, and vice, and folly have cast their iron net about him, and he has become loathsome and unable to escape from his loathsomeness. Do you see him? He is tottering onwards to his ruin. From childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, he has sinned right on; and now he is going towards his last days. The pit of hell is flaring across his path, flinging its frightful rays immediately before his face,

and yet he sees it not: he still goes on in his wickedness, despising God and hating his own salvation. Leave him there. A few years have passed, and now hear another story. Do you see that spirit yonder—foremost among the ranks, most sweetly singing the praises of God? Do you mark it robed in white, an emblem of its purity? Do you see it as it casts its crown before the feet of Jesus, and acknowledges him the Lord of all? Hark! do you hear it as it sings the sweetest song that ever charmed Paradise itself? Listen to it, its song is this:—

“I, the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.”

“Unto him that loved me, and washed me from my sins in his blood, unto him be glory and honour, and majesty, and power, and dominion, world without end.” And who is that whose song thus emulates the seraph’s strain? The same person who a little while ago was so frightfully depraved, the selfsame man! But he has been washed, he has been sanctified, he has been justified. If you ask me, then, what is meant by salvation, I tell you that it reaches all the way from that poor, desperately fallen piece of humanity, to that high-soaring spirit up yonder, praising God. That is to be saved—to have our old thoughts made into new ones; to have our old habits broken off, and to have new habits given; to have our old sins pardoned, and to have righteousness imputed; to have peace in the conscience, peace to man, and peace with God; to have the spotless robe of imputed righteousness cast about our loins, and ourselves healed and cleansed. To be saved is to be rescued from the gulf of perdition; to be raised to the throne of heaven; to be delivered from the wrath, and curse, and the thunders of an angry God, and brought to feel and taste the love, the approval, and applause of Jehovah, our Father and our Friend. And all this Christ gives to sinners. When I preach this simple gospel, I have nothing to do with those who will not call themselves sinners. If you must be canonized, if you claim a saintly perfection of your own, I have nothing to do with you. My gospel is to sinners, and sinners alone; and the whole of this salvation, so broad and brilliant, and unspeakably precious, and everlastingly secure, is addressed this day to the outcast, to the offscouring—in one word, it is addressed to sinners.

Now, I think I have announced the truth of the text. Certainly, no man can misunderstand me unless he does so intentionally:—“Christ Jesus came to save sinners.”

II. And, now, I have but little to do, but yet I have the hardest work—THE DOUBLE COMMENDATION of the text. First, “it is a faithful saying;” that is a commendation to the *doubter*: secondly, it is worthy of all acceptance;” that is a commendation to the *careless*—nay, to the *anxious*, too.

1. First, “it is a faithful saying;” that is a commendation to the *doubter*. Oh, the devil, as soon as he finds men under the sound of the word of God, slips along through the crowd, and he whispers in one heart, “Don’t believe it!” and in another, “Laugh at it!” and in another, “Away with it!” And when he finds a person for whom the message was intended—one who feels himself a sinner, he is generally doubly in earnest, that he may not believe it at all. I know what Satan said to you, poor friend, over there. He said, “Don’t believe it—it’s too good to be true.” Let me answer the devil by God’s own words: “This is a faithful saying.” It is good, and it is as true as it is good. *It is too good to be true* if God had not himself said it; but, inasmuch as he said it, it is not too good to be true. I will tell thee why thou thinkest it to too good to be true; it is because thou measurest God’s corn by thine own bushel. Please to remember, that his ways are not as thy ways, nor his thoughts as thy thoughts; for as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways high above thy ways, and his thoughts above thy thoughts. Why, thou thinkest that if any man had offended thee, thou couldst not have forgiven him. Ay, but God is not a man: he can forgive where thou canst not; and where thou wouldst take thy brother by the throat, God would forgive him seventy times seven. Thou dost not know Jesus, or else thou wouldst believe him. We think that we are honouring God when we think great thoughts of our sin. Let us recollect, that while we ought to think very greatly of our own sin, we dishonour God if we think our sin greater than his grace. God’s grace is infinitely greater than the greatest of our crimes. There is but one exception that he has ever made, and a penitent cannot be included in that. I beseech you, therefore, get better thoughts of him. Think how good he is, and how great he is; and when you know this to be a true saying, I hope you will thrust Satan away from you, and not think it too

good to be true. I know what he will say to you next;—"Well, if it is true, it is not true to you: it is true to all the world, but not to you. Christ died to save sinners; it is true you are a sinner, but you are not included in it." Tell the devil he is a liar to his face. There is no way of answering him except by straightforward language. We do not believe in the individuality of the existence of the devil, as Martin Luther did. When the devil came to him, he served him as he did other imposters; he turned him out of doors, with a good hard saying. Tell him on the authority of Christ himself, that he is a liar. Christ says, he came to save sinners; the devil says he did not. He says, virtually, he did not, for he declares that he did not come to save you, and you feel that you are a sinner. Tell him he is a liar, and send him about his business. At any rate, never put his testimony in comparison with that of Christ. He looks to-day on thee from Calvary's cross, with those same dear tearful eyes that once wept over Jerusalem. He looks on thee, my brother, my sister, and says through these lips of mine, "I came into the world to save sinners." Sinner! wilt thou not believe on him, and trust thy soul in his hands? Wilt thou not say,—"Sweet Lord Jesus, thou shalt be our confidence henceforth! 'For thee all other hopes I resign, thou art, thou ever shalt be mine.'" Come, poor timid one, I must endeavour to re-assure you, by repeating again this text:—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." It is a true saying; I cannot have you reject it. You say you cannot believe it. Let me ask you, "Do you not believe the Bible?" "Yes," you say, "every word of it." Then, this is one word of it—"Jesus came into the world to save sinners." I charge thee by thy honesty—as thou sayest, "I believe the Bible," believe this. There it stands. Dost thou believe Jesus Christ? Come, answer me. Dost thou think he lieth? Would a God of Truth stoop to deceit? "No," thou sayest, "whatever God says, I believe." It is God that says it to thee, then, in his own book. He died to save sinners. Come, once again. Dost thou not believe facts? Did not Jesus Christ rise from the dead? Does not that prove his gospel to be authentic? If, then, the gospel be authentic, the whole of what Christ declares to be the gospel must be true. I charge thee, as thou believest his resurrection, believe that he died for sinners, and cast thyself upon this truth. Once again. Wilt thou deny the testimony of all the saints in heaven and of all the saints on earth? Ask every one of them, and they will tell you this is true—he died to save sinners. I, as one of the least of his servants, must bear my testimony. When Jesus came to save me, I protest he found nothing good in me. I know of a surety, that there was nothing in me to recommend me to Christ; and if he loved me, he loved me because he would do so; for there was nothing loveable, nothing that he could desire in me. What I am, I am by his grace; he made me what I am. But a sinner he found me, at first, and his own sovereign love was the only reason for his choice. Ask all the people of God, and they will all say the same.

But you say you are too great a sinner. Why, you are not greater than some in heaven already. You say that you are the greatest sinner that ever lived. I say you are mistaken. The greatest sinner died some years ago and went to heaven. My text says so:—"Of whom I am chief." So, you see, the chief one has been saved before you; and if the chief one has been saved, why should you not be? There are the sinners standing in a line, and I see one starting out from the ranks, and he says, "Make way, make way; I stand at the head of you, I am the chief of sinners; give me the lowest place; let me take the lowest room." "No," cries another, "not you; I am a greater sinner than you." Then the apostle Paul comes, and says: "I challenge you all; Manasseh and Magdalene, I challenge you. I will have the lowest place. I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, but I have obtained mercy, that in me first God might show his long-suffering." Now, if Christ has saved the greatest sinner that ever lived, oh, sinner, great as you may be, you cannot be greater than the greatest, and he is able to save you. Oh, I beseech you by the myriads of witnesses around the throne, and by the thousands of witnesses on earth, by Jesus Christ, the witness on Calvary, by the blood of sprinkling that is a witness even now, by God himself, and by his Word which is faithful, I beseech you believe this faithful saying, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

2. And, now, to close. The second commendation of the text is to the *careless* and to the *anxious* too. To the *careless* one this text is worthy of all acceptance. Oh, man, thou scornest it. I saw thee curl thy lip in derision. The story was badly told, and therefore thou didst scorn it. Thou saidst in thine heart,

"What is that to me? If this be what the man preaches, I care not to hear it: if this be the gospel it is nothing." Ah, sir, it is something, though thou knowest it not. It is worthy of thy acceptance: the thing I have preached, however poor the way in which it is preached, is well worthy of thy attention. I care not what orator may lecture to you, he can never have a subject greater than mine. Demosthenes himself, might stand here, or Cicero, his later compeer, they could never have a weightier subject. Though a child should tell you of it, the subject might well excuse him, for it is so important. Man, it is not your house that is in danger, it is not your body only, it is your soul. I beseech you, by eternity, by its dreadful terrors, by the horrors of hell, by that fearful word, "Eternity—Eternity," I beseech thee as a man, thy brother, one who loves thee, and who would fain snatch thee from the burning, I beseech thee do not despise thine own mercies; for this is worthy of thee, man, worthy of all thy attention, and worthy of thy heartiest acceptance. Art thou wise? This is more worthy than thy wisdom. Art thou rich? This is worthier than all thy wealth. Art thou famous? This is worthier than all thy honour. Art thou princely? This is worthier than thine ancestry, or than all thy goodly heritage. The thing I preach is the worthiest thing under heaven, because it will last thee when all things else fade away. It will stand by thee when thou hast to stand alone. In the hour of death it will plead for thee when thou hast to answer the summons of justice at God's bar. And it shall be thine eternal consolation through never ending ages. It is worthy of thy acceptance.

And, now, dost thou feel anxious? Is thy heart sad? Dost thou say, "I desire to be saved. Can I trust to this gospel? Is it strong enough to bear me? I am an elephantine sinner; will not its pillars crumble like leaves beneath my weight of sin?" "I the chief of sinners am;" will its portals be wide enough to receive me? My spirit is diseased with sin; can this medicine cure it? Yes, it is worthy of you: it is equal to your disease, it is equal to your wants, it is all-sufficient for your demands. If I had a half-gospel to preach, or a defective one, I would not preach it earnestly; but I have one that is worthy of all acceptance. "But, sir, I have been a thief, a whoremonger, a drunkard." It is worthy of thee, for he came to save sinners, and thou art one. "But, sir, I have been a blasphemer." It does not exclude even thee; it is worthy of thy acceptance. But, mark; it is worthy of all the acceptance you can give it. You may not only accept it in your head but in your heart; you may press it to your soul and call it all in all; you may feed on it, and live on it. And if you live for it, and suffer for it, and die for it, it is worthy of all.

I must let you go now; but my spirit feels as if it would linger here. Strange it should be that many men should not care for their own souls, when your minister this day cares for you. What matters it to me whether men be lost or saved? Shall I be any the better for your salvation? Assuredly there is little gain there. And yet I feel more for you, many of you, than you feel for yourselves. Oh, strange hardening of the heart, that a man should not care for his own salvation, that he should, without a thought, reject the most precious truth. Stay, sinner, stay, ere thou turnest from thine own mercy—stay, once more—perhaps this shall be thy last warning, or worse, it may be the last warning thou shalt ever feel. Thou feelest it now. Oh, I beseech thee quench not the Spirit. Go not forth from this place to talk with idle gossip on thy way home. Go not forth to forget what manner of man thou art. But hasten to thy home; seek thy chamber; shut to the door; fall on thy face by thy bedside; confess thy sin; cry unto Jesus; tell him thou art a wretch undone without his sovereign grace; tell him thou has heard this morning that he came to save sinners, and that the thought of such a love as that hath made thee lay down the weapons of thy rebellion, and that thou art desirous to be his. There on thy face plead with him, and say unto him, "Lord save me, or I perish."

The Lord bless you all for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[The Publishers apologise for the inaccuracy of this Report, which is not a fair representation of the Sermon; but the usual Reporter was not able to attend, and the most eminent gentlemen of the profession are unable to follow Mr. Spurgeon, until they have become used to his rapid and abrupt style.]

HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED UP?

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 13TH, 1857,

BY THE REV. R. W. DIBBIN, M.A.,

AT WEST STREET EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, ST. GILES'S.

“How are the dead raised up?”—1 Cor. xv. 35.

YOU must imagine some Sadducean scoffer to be meant by this “some man.” The Apostle says, “Some man will say, how are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” The Sadducees, you know, denied angel and spirit, and the resurrection. Paul here supposes the case of a man who thinks himself wise, with a sneer on his lip—one of a very large class, not in Paul’s time only, but in every time and in every place. It is the language of self-conceited ignorance—“How are the dead raised up?” Oh, that word, *how*. It is a favourite word with some people. “*How* can it be?” they say; “I don’t see how it can be, therefore it cannot be!”—a quiet assumption of omniscience, you perceive. I have read, and do read more Infidel books than, probably, any man here—more, I think, than most men. Some of them are clever enough in their way. The *Weekly Dispatch*, the *Reasoner*, the books of the Mormonites, of the Swedenborgians, of the Broad-church Infidels—or philosophers we may call them—of the smooth Tractarians, the avowed Papist periodicals; I read them all. All of them have talent; for the Devil, who has a mighty intellect, helps all his servants as much as he can. But what I observe in them all, as a general rule, is, that they agree to set aside the Word of God whenever it opposes their respective fancies on any given subject. They take different modes, indeed, of stating their opinions; and they have very different opinions amongst themselves; as you must suppose, when you recall the various classes that I have gathered together in one sentence. But still, they all agree in this—to make the Word of God of none effect. Professed Christians do so, by what they call *explaining* the Bible, in order that it may suit their views; which is, in other words, explaining the Bible away, and putting something else in the place of it. Infidels, more honest than others, contradict the Bible, and say, “The Bible says this, and it is not true.” That clever fool, Tom Paine, in his writings, calls the Apostle Paul a fool. He is speaking on the passage in the context, where, by the Holy Ghost, the Apostle Paul, in the 35th verse, says:—“Some man will say, how are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” The Apostle replies, or rather the Holy Ghost by the Apostle, “Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.” That is the Apostle’s answer. Paine, in replying to that, says, “Thou fool, Paul, thou sayest, except the seed die it cannot rise again. You ought to know, that if it doth really die it will never rise again; for, if it perishes in the earth, it will never send up a green blade.” And upon this he triumphs not a little. No doubt many thousands of working men have talked and laughed over this passage in the beer-shop, and given the weight of their approval to Tom Paine’s decision. They have said, Paul was a fool, and Paine was wise.

I have learned, my brethren, to doubt dogmatic people. I am old enough to

remember many things which, at the time, were incredible to many, but which afterwards came to be true. I remember when many sober, sensible people laughed at the thought of lighting a city with gas, and called it, in a humorous way, all a bottle of smoke; and yet, look around us. Here we are, by the help of that very same gas, looking at the Word of God, and enabled to look each other in the face. I remember, too, that the Infidel Voltaire sneers at a passage in the writings of Sir Isaac Newton, because that great man, in explaining a passage in one of the prophets, said, probably the day would come when men would be able to travel as much as one hundred miles in one hour. There is the Infidel's ridicule at such things, and there is the prediction of Newton, who was led thereto by the Word of God. Voltaire little dreamed of railways, or Newton either; and yet we see, that at the present day we can go between seventy and eighty miles an hour, and think it no wonderful proceeding. Thus, you see, time proves the presumption of ignorance, and time proves the solidity of wisdom. Where all are ignorant, it is easy for a confident, positive man to get up and say to those about him, "I know all about it—hear me!" for no one can contradict him. Nothing is easier than this assumption of infallibility, where any one chooses to assert a dogmatic opinion upon a matter where all are equally ignorant. It is so in many cases; and more especially with regard to religion. It was so here in the case supposed. Paul preached the resurrection of the body; and, says the Infidel Sadducee, with a shrewd smile upon his face, "Ah, with what body do they come? The dead rise again, after they have been committed to the grave, and their bodies crumbled to dust? Rise again! what body do they come with?" "For, look you," says he to the ignorant masses, who are always willing enough to listen to those who mislead them, "Look you, when a man dies his body turns to the earth. That very earth may be converted into wheat, or vegetable matter of some kind; because, you know, the earth is the means whereby the seed is changed, and from which the ear and the full corn in the ear spring. Well, then, when that same corn or vegetable is eaten by a man, the material of which it is made becomes part of his body; that body will be buried in like manner, and go to dust again; and that may be again turned into food; and so the process may be repeated from generation to generation; so that the very same materials may form part of many bodies. How can each man have the same material in his body, seeing that many men may have the same material?" This is what the Infidel says. And then comes a very humorous description of the absurdity of the universal resurrection—one man disputing with another man, saying, "This is my bone;" but, "No," says another, "that bone is mine;" and then comes a third, a hundred years later in the history of the world, and says, "It is my bone." "And so," says the scoffer and the Infidel, "you see that the resurrection of the body involves in it the very greatest and incredible absurdity."

"Vain man would be wise." It is thus that unthinking people are imposed upon. They are not a few who think this argument very profound. They say, "We never thought of this. There is no resurrection! for with what body can they come? The thing is unanswerable! We understand all about it! The Bible is wrong!" So the matter ends. I think it is a great pity, that they who can decide so easily upon the most mysterious and difficult subjects, have not corresponding talents in ordinary matters. I think it is a great pity that Infidels, who are so wondrously above the great mass of mankind who do believe the Bible with regard to religion and things connected therewith, are not equally superior to them in anything else. Either among gentlefolk or simple folk, either amongst the learned and the great, or amongst the lower classes of society and the unlearned, I never could find that Infidels—apart from their Infidelity—were at all wiser than other men; not I. In the lower ranks, for instance, for aught I see to the contrary, the man who believes his Bible is just as good a workman, quite as intelligent, and generally a much better husband, and servant, or clerk, or master, than the Infidel man is in the same position; so far as my observation has extended, and it is not small nor short. I do not profess myself to be very clever; I have a great respect for scholars, and for learned men, and for men of mind, without professing to have any very great wisdom myself; I only lay claim to common sense; but I should be very sorry, indeed, if I had not as much sense as most Infidels that I have come across.

Now, for this question in the text, I confess at once, I should not know how to answer it, if the Bible did not guide me in the matter. Not that I see any difficulty in the objections that I have stated, and which the Infidel thinks to be such a triumphant refutation of the resurrection. For by that mode of argument I could prove many curious things, much to the confusion of the Infidel himself. Great absurdities can I prove by this same argument of the Infidel. He says, it is impossible that a man to be raised again—that it is impossible the same body, a hundred years after, five hundred years after, a thousand years after, can be brought again from the grave. Now, look at what this will prove if you admit that. I could prove every man alive is not the same man that he was ten years ago. It is a known fact—every surgeon, every small man in a medical way, knows it as well as I do—that our bodies are in a perpetual change, or flux. Not one of us has a particle of what we had ten years ago; every particle has been changed; so that, in point of fact, we have not the same bodies—if you come to look at the atoms of which the body is made up. Now, what a very sad affair, that would be—to say nothing of the resurrection—what sad results would come in this world if that theory were adopted. It is not the same body, for it has changed and become something else. It may have passed into air; it may have passed into liquid; it may have passed into earth. It may have passed into food; and then what was my body is now somebody else's body. Well, what will result? What would a poor old pensioner say, if our beloved Queen were to take his pension away, because he has not the same body that he had when he fought at Trafalgar, or at Waterloo? What would he say, if at the end of ten years, or twenty years, or forty years, his pension were taken away on that pretence?—"That is not the body that fought: it has gone long ago; it is *that* which was pensioned, not the new body." I think most men would object to such an arrangement. It might be said, his soul is the same if his body is not the same. But then, pensions are not meant for the soul, they are meant for the body; that body which was carried into battle, that body which bled and was maimed, that body which carried the flag of his Queen triumphantly through smoke, and fire, and death. Yet, if this hypothesis were adopted, we should not have many men enabled to enjoy in their old age the pensions so wisely and beneficently awarded to them for their services.

Now, I am thankful to be set right—and I would thank any man to set me right—especially on so important a subject as the resurrection. Like the Infidel, I must have my reason satisfied. I cannot take a man's word, and succumb to him, merely because he says, he is right and I am wrong. When I bring before him what is satisfactory to me, and he chooses to set that aside, and say it is not satisfactory to him, I cannot help that. I content myself with what the Bible says on this matter; and, the more so, because I do not see that it is a matter on which unenlightened reason can give much information. Now, what says the Bible in answer to the text—"How are the dead raised up?" The Bible tells you, it is by the power of God. God raises the dead, the same that raised Christ from the dead, after He had suffered for the sins of man, and fulfilled the righteousness of the law for his Church. Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God, and every other man shall be raised in like manner. His risen body was to our resurrection, even as the sheaf-offering was to the general harvest. Now, I see no difficulty at all in believing that God who made a body can raise a body from the grave. Of course, God himself could not do a thing which is demonstrably absurd to suppose; as in the case of the same materials forming parts of one body and belonging at the same time to different bodies. If I read that in the Bible, I say plainly I would not believe it. If it laid before me that which my reason showed me could not be true, then, I should say at once, it is not from God. That is the reason I do not believe the doctrine of transubstantiation. The Papist takes up a bit of bread, or wafer, and says, "that is Christ"—that he is there, body and bones, flesh and blood. I do not believe it. I know what bread is when I see it. I know what a wafer is when I see it. I can taste it, see it, handle it; I can hear it crack when I break it in my hands. I know what a human body is too. I know its colour, size, and shape, and all about it, so far as this question is concerned. Therefore, I know very well, that what a Papist priest shows me is not a body. "Well," says he, "the Bible teaches you so." I won't believe it, for it is a lie. The Bible does not say it. When I ask him to show it to me,

he says, "This is my body"—and Christ had a bit of bread in his hand! What, do you mean that Christ said such a silly thing as that? "Does he not say so? You ought to have faith in Christ." Yes, faith in Christ, but I do not think Christ was so foolish as to say anything so nonsensical as that. Thus, I reject transubstantiation; and, I say again, that if the Bible taught that, or any other absurdity, I would not believe the Bible. "Oh," say some, "this is a dangerous doctrine, indeed; what is to become of the doctrine of the Trinity? We do not understand that." Neither do I understand that. "Then, why do you believe it?" Many things I do not understand I believe fully. A man takes up a foreign book, and opens it at a certain page, and reads:—"The drunkard shall be short lived." "Does it say that? Do you understand that language?" He says he does. "I don't understand it, but I believe it, because you are a travelled man, and you understand the language—I take your word for it." So again, a man comes to me and says some deep thing in chemistry. "If," says he, "I put together certain materials of the most different qualities, and unite them, they shall make a third, different from both." Very extraordinary! I should have thought when he mixed the two together it would be something like a mixture of the two. "No; it becomes a third thing, different from both." I believe you: you understand these matters, and I take your word for that. So when God Almighty, in his Word tells me that he is a Spirit, that he is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and yet that he is only one God, I begin to think, first, what do I know about spirits? what is a spirit? But for this book, I never knew, at all, that there was such a thing as a spirit. But what sort of a thing is a spirit? I cannot tell. I have a spirit—what is it? I do not know. I cannot tell how it is made; I do not know in what part of the body it is; I do not know its nature and character. Who can *reason* upon such matters? One knows nothing about it. That is my case with regard to the Trinity. So when a Popish priest says, "you will not be guided by reason where you have the Trinity before you, but you will be guided by reason when you have transubstantiation." Granted; but why? I have faculties which enable me to distinguish between a bit of bread and a man; and I have not faculties which will enable me to distinguish about spirits, and, least of all, such a spirit as the Father of Spirits. They are not parallel cases. Therefore, when I say I will not believe the Bible if it teaches nonsense, I mean exactly what I say. There is nothing presumptuous in it at all. There is nothing contrary to reason in the Word of God. There is much that is above reason, and with that I have no quarrel. It is to be expected that my Heavenly Father must know and say many things too wise and deep for me. I am a mere fool in comparison with him.

Well, then, the Bible does not say that the same materials which belong to one man, and afterwards belong, perhaps, to ten other men, shall, in the resurrection, belong respectively to them all. It would say simple nonsense if it said that. But what does it say? It says this:—"There is a natural body and a spiritual body." Now, I want to know touching the bodies in which men live and die, which are buried, and rot, and go to dust, whether they are natural bodies, or whether they are spiritual bodies? There is no difficulty here—they are all natural bodies. The bones, the flesh, the blood, are all *natural*. We understand that. When they rise again—"flesh and blood shall not enter the Kingdom of God"—when they rise again they are *spiritual* bodies. So you see the Bible does not, in the slightest degree, give you the idea that the body in the resurrection will be, in all identical particulars, the same as the body which is buried in the earth. Why, consider a moment. If it were so, every blind man must rise blind; every maimed man must rise maimed; and every man who hath any deformity, or defect in his earthly tabernacle must rise with that same. See the monstrous absurdity stated by men who profess to be wise! The Bible does not say it is the same in these particulars. You see that Paul does not profess what the Infidels so triumphantly refute. They may refute the thing they set up if they please, but they do not refute the Bible, for the Bible has never said anything of the kind. The body of a risen man will be very different from what it is now. "The dead will be raised incorruptible." Bodies are not incorruptible *now*, I think. Every man who has a fever, or a wound, or a running sore, may know that, and every man that sees a body in a charnel house, rotting, and the worms feeding upon it, may know that. Not incorruptible, now; but it is to be raised incorruptible. We

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who live on earth shall be changed; not have bodies like these. The whole of the Infidel's triumphant argument and objection proceeds upon a supposition, which the Bible never makes, that the body is identical in all particles with what a man hath when he is in a state of sin and death. Whether dead or living, saints will be raised incorruptible, and their bodies will be like that of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

If any body wishes to know what sort of bodies these will be, they will find some information in Luke ix. 27. Our blessed Jesus in saying to his disciples, "I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God." The Kingdom of God—that term which was used for the future coming reign of our Lord and Saviour in his heavenly kingdom. "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to Pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening." If you look in two other Gospels you will see a similar description, that his body became bright and changed, and different from what it was before he went up into the Mount, and after he came down. No doubt, it was the resurrection body which they saw in Christ. Moses and Elijah were there; and they, too, had similarly glorified bodies. That is the body the saints are to have—a spiritual body, incorruptible, and that shall not fade away. It is a very different thing from what the Infidel argument supposes. The Bible you see does not represent it as they refute it. See too, again, the same Apostle Paul, in writing to this same church in 2 Cor. v. 1—4 says, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." That means the new body, the glorified body, the same body such as they saw Christ have when he was on the Mount of Transfiguration "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." The new body, the spiritual body. "If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened."—"We that are in these bodies of death groan and are burdened by them. Not that we would be unclothed,"—not that we want to die but clothed with immortality. Not that we want to be unclothed; to have the soul stripped of the body. We do not want that. We do not love death. Death is always a season of humiliation and punishment; we do not want that. We want the body to be clothed with immortality. We want the corruptible to be made incorruptible, or the mortal to be swallowed up of life. That is the promise or hope set before us in the Gospel, as you see the beloved John says, 1 John iii. 2. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." It is not yet manifest. You cannot see the difference between a saint and a sinner, as far as his body is considered. Contrarywise, the saint often suffers more in his body, and has more of weakness and infirmity than the sinner. Sinners are often healthy and strong; their eyes stand out with fatness; and they do what they list. Whereas saints are often worn and wearied, and broken down, and are very trembling specimens of mortality. So, it does not *appear* what we shall be. But this we know, that when Christ shall appear, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Then will be that glorious change, which will be wrought upon the bodies of the chosen and believing people of God.

It may be objected by some, that all that has been said relates to the *saints*. We have been speaking of the body natural, as compared with the body spiritual. And that relates only to the saints. So does the text; "How are the dead raised up?" Paul was not speaking about all men. If you read it, you will see that it is all about the saints, from one end of the passage to the other. He says, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; sown in weakness; raised in glory." Then, the Sadducean objector says, "How are the dead raised up?—with what body do they come?" What a foolish thing to suppose that men rotting in the earth shall rise again! Paul answers this objection. He is not speaking about the resurrection of the wicked. The fact is, the Bible says much more about this blessed subject than it does of that awful subject, the resurrection of the wicked to eternal damnation. But, yet, there is quite enough said upon it to make it very clear. There is revelation there. For instance, in Mark ix. 49, is a very

expressive declaration from the lips of our blessed Lord himself. He is speaking of the condition of the wicked at the 47th verse:—"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." This is the passage I mean:—"For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." Mark that! *There are two classes spoken of, and their condition is also spoken of.* There is "every one," that is evidently every one that he has been speaking of, viz., the wicked. He says, "every one shall be salted with fire." Then of the righteous—"every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." The righteous render their bodies "a living sacrifice" to our God. The whole of a Christian's life is, or ought to be, a life of sacrifice to him who was sacrificed for us. What is the meaning of salting? What is the effect of salt in nature? Our Lord was always speaking in parables; therefore you must look for the meaning of "salted with fire" by parabolic interpretation. "Salted with fire," on the face of it, means nothing at all; you cannot salt with fire literally; there must be some parabolic meaning. What is it? What is the effect of salting? It is to preserve. Animal food of any kind if not salted will corrupt; but if you salt it, it will last years and centuries. Look at the mummies in Egypt, how many hundreds of years those bodies have been preserved! When the flesh which is upon them has been boiled in water, it has the same appearance as though it had only been preserved a year ago; and when it is let alone, the preserving matter being withdrawn, it corrupts just the same, as meat corrupts now, if laid aside in a fresh state. This shows the effect of salt in preserving. "Salted with fire." It is only a parabolic method of saying, that their bodies shall be everlastingly in fire without being consumed. If your body were put into fire, it would not be long before it would be consumed to ashes. But Christ says, they shall be salted with fire. This is the fire, the smoke of the torment whereof shall ascend for ever and ever. Then, you know, salt is also used in a good sense, in the sense of purification, for as salt will make a thing last, so it will keep it free from corruption. So, he says, "every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." Thus, according to the manner of Christ, you have the same word used in two different senses—quite a common thing with him; as, for instance, "Let the *dead* bury their *dead*."—there the word *dead* is used in two senses. So here is the word which will tell you something of the resurrection of the wicked—that they will be raised to an eternal existence, and their bodies salted with fire.

Proceed we now to the APPLICATION of the subject. Not that I can apply it; God only can so apply his truth as to make it profitable, whether to sinner or to saint. It is he alone who, by his Holy Spirit, can pierce the hard heart, open the blind eyes, and convert the sinner from the error of his ways. It is he alone that can say to them that are "of fearful heart, be strong; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." When, therefore, I say, I apply the subject, I mean I apply it to the character concerned, looking to God the Holy Ghost to apply it to the heart.

I. To the sinner I would say, instead of asking with the scoffer, "How are the dead raised up?" how is it possible that a dead man can ever come to life again, and his body come back from the grave in which it has rotted? it would be better to ask, "How shall I be raised up? with what sort of a body? what sort of a resurrection will mine be?" You know there will be two resurrections. In Dan. xii. 2, the Holy Ghost tells you, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." It appears there will be first a resurrection of the righteous, and then a resurrection of the wicked. I am not about to argue that subject now, but to state that it will be so—that the resurrection of the righteous will precede the resurrection of the wicked—I believe by a thousand years or more. A man who has served God in the old dispensation, with Abraham, or Moses, or David, or in this dispensation, with Paul, or Luther, or the present Archbishop of Canterbury; I say, no matter when the man lived, if he was a man of God, when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, he will be raised incorruptible. Then the wicked will be left in their corruption; there they will lie till a later hour in the day, till a more advanced period of the history of the world. The sea will not give up its dead of the wicked; the earth will not open its graves and send out the wicked; there they will lie until the bright and blessed period of the

millennium has passed over. After that, the dead shall be raised; then the wicked will appear, and have to give an account of the things done in the body. Now, not to enter into speculations, but simply to deal with facts, you should think,—Is it true that every man, saint or sinner, shall rise again, and appear before the judgment seat of Christ? is it a fact as regards me, and if it is, how shall I rise again? Supposing that you die and are buried, or supposing that, in your present condition, Christ should come, what will be the nature of your resurrection? What will be the body you will rise up in? Will it be incorruptible, undefiled? or will it be salted with fire? Will it be rendered immortal, and at the same time incapable of happiness for ever? That is the question for you to put to yourself; and you should not, as many do, as I have shown by these Infidel writers whom I have quoted, endeavour to amuse and delude yourselves with speculations, as to the probability of escape, and try to pick some hole in the description of the resurrection, and say, "This thing will never be." A foolish proceeding that, for a man, when he has good evidence of a case before him, to hunt until he finds something or other which he thinks to be a flaw, by which he may possibly escape. Men never do so in worldly matters. Let a man come in now, and say to any one of you, "Your house is on fire," would you say, "Oh, people often tell lies; I dare say it is not so. Very improbable that my house should be on fire rather than any other man's. There are so many thousands of houses in London, that it is half a million to one that it is not mine. I will sit still and hear the sermon." Would you do that? No; nor any sane man. What would you do? You would go directly; you would not stop to reason on probabilities or improbabilities; you would go directly, especially if your wife and children were in the house. You would not stop to hear the sermon, and you would be very foolish if you did. Quite as foolish is the Infidel who chooses to be satisfied with a vain speculation. A man takes up this Book and picks out a passage—"How are the dead raised up?" "Oh, I do not believe anything of the kind. No, there is an end of the body at death, and of all connected with it." Oh, do not act in that foolish manner. I am sure there is many a man who is confined in Bedlam who has never acted half so foolishly as you are acting now. I think the insane ravings of all the madmen in the world do not equal the vain babbling of a man who has the Bible in his hand, and talks and persuades himself into eternal damnation.

It must not be forgotten that those who have heard the Gospel will have a much more terrible punishment in hell than those who have not heard the Gospel; I cannot see how a heathen can be saved; I do not see how a Jew can be saved. I do not see how any man can be saved who does not believe in Christ. But I do say this, that "the man who knew his Lord's will, and did it not, will be beaten with many stripes." Yes, there is a greater and a less damnation. There are those who are heaping up wrath against the day of wrath. There is greater wickedness in one man than in another man; and there shall be greater punishment for the man that hath committed greater wickedness. And the greatest wickedness of all is the rejection of Christ Jesus. You may sum up all that is utterable in the way of villainy, of atrocity, of uncleanness, and of every other assignable moral obliquity, and put them together, and weigh them against that one thing, the rejection of Christ—I say that loaded scale would kick the beam; it would fly up like a feather when weighed against a cwt. of lead. There is no crime so hateful to God as the rejection of his dear Son. Every commandment of the ten might be shattered and shivered into a thousand pieces, the whole decalogue on the tables of the law might be dashed on the earth, and trampled under foot, and God would be angry at that; but the despising of his Son, the rejection of the Lord, the trampling of the blood of the crucified under the foot, that is a thing for which a man shall burn, and burn, and burn, for ever and for ever! The devils in hell will rejoice over him; if they could be happy, it would be to see his writhing and his wretchedness, his remorse and his vain repentance. God, in his infinite mercy, open your eyes in time; God save you from the wrath to come; give you to repent now, give you to believe now, lest you repent too late; lest you believe too late, and know the truth in hell, which if you had known and believed on earth, might have saved you from hell!

Oh God the Holy Ghost make these people to tremble. They reject Jesus. "They

talk about Christianity, but when you see them at their homes where is their Christianity? When you see them at their daily business where is their Christianity? They talk about Christianity, but when you hear their words and see their conduct, and know their history, where is their Christianity? It is a lie from beginning to end. Will a lie save a man think you? No, he shall go to the father of lies, to his own place. Repent, therefore, and be converted, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the Prophet, "Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish."

My beloved in the Lord, there is a word for you, too, "How are the dead raised up?" We know how the wicked will be, but how about you? You know very well, for I have told you as far as it can be known. Some persons say, "we do not know what will be in the world to come." Well, certainly, not by experience. We have so much unhappiness here, so much infirmity in the body, so much distress in the mind, so much perplexity in the world, so much temptation from the devil, that it is very difficult even to conceive a condition where a person is altogether happy. I have sometimes thought, when I have watched a little child, full of love and mirth, grateful to a parent or a friend that has presented it, perhaps, a flower (like itself but not so fair) or perhaps a toy—I have seen the little creature, as it were, in a heaven upon earth. I have seen its beautiful countenance (for all children are beautiful) light up, its eyes glisten like stars, and smiles play about its ruby lips, and its little white teeth peeping between, and such a merry laugh from its happy heart; and I have thought, that is heaven on earth. Oh, the look of love and look of gratitude! I think a penny or a sixpence well laid out merely to get a smile from a child. Many a time a man might make himself comfortable for a minute or two if he would do that thing. It is cheaply bought. There is something so simple, so pure, so altogether lovely, in the ways of children, that I pity the man who cannot find a satisfaction in them. Yes, I have sometimes thought if we could form any notion of what a perfectly happy condition could be, you might see something of it in a little child; very healthy, very happy, very grateful; it unites for the moment all that is necessary to make happiness. But, oh, if it breaks the toy!—oh, if it snaps the flower!—oh, if it slips its foot and falls! all its smiles are chased away, and down come the tears, like little diamonds, and drop upon its snowy breast! And there is the heaven dashed to pieces again! So I do not know where to look for happiness here. It is true, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man what God hath prepared for them that love him." I cannot conceive how I shall feel when I am always happy. I am happy now, happier than most of you. But as to the resurrection, I cannot conceive how it will be, because it is a state of which I have never tasted. But we do know something of it. You can conceive something of a glorious body to look at, bright and shining as the sun. You can conceive of there being no such thing as pain, or infirmity, or ignorance. You can conceive, too, of being amongst those you love, and who love you, to feel that no man will have the face of a stranger towards you, nor the heart of hatred. You can enter into something of that, can't you? Pick out the nearest and dearest to your heart—your kinsman or kinswoman—be it wife or child, and think how you feel in the sweetest and dearest seasons of communion with them. Then carry that out, in thought, into full and enlarged enjoyment for ever and for ever; and you will have some faint conception of what will be the state of the blessed in the resurrection. Be sure that no one will be your enemy. Be sure that all who speak words of love before your face, will speak words of kindness behind your back. Be sure that all who say they love you, will feel they love you. Be sure there will never come unkindness, ingratitude, deceit, revenge, or any other foul thing, which makes this world so often like hell, and so unlike heaven. Think of that, and then "How are the dead raised up?" They are raised with bodies, such as we have seen in the transfiguration, to a condition where they shall sorrow no more, nor sigh any more; where there shall be no sickness, no pain, no death, and best of all, where there shall be no sin.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE GREAT RESERVOIR.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 21, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”—Proverbs iv. 23.

If I should vainly attempt to fashion my discourse after lofty models, I should this morning compare the human heart to the ancient city of Thebes, out of whose hundred gates multitudes of warriors were wont to march. As was the city such were her armies, as was her inward strength, such were they who came forth of her. I might then urge the necessity of keeping the heart, because it is the metropolis of our manhood, the citadel and armoury of our humanity. Let the chief fortress surrender to the enemy, and the occupation of the rest must be an easy task. Let the principal stronghold be possessed by evil, the whole land must be overrun thereby. Instead, however, of doing this, I shall attempt what possibly I may be able to perform, by a humble metaphor and a simple figure, which will be easily understood; I shall endeavour to set forth the wise man's doctrine, that our life issues from the heart, and thus I shall labour to show the absolute necessity of keeping the heart with all diligence.

You have seen the great reservoirs provided by our water companies, from which the water which is to supply hundreds of streets and thousands of houses is kept. Now, the heart is just the reservoir of man, and our life is allowed to flow in its proper season. That life may flow through different pipes—the mouth, the hand, the eye; but still all the issues of hand, of eye, of lip, derive their source from the great fountain and central reservoir, the heart; and hence there is no difficulty in showing the great necessity that exists for keeping this reservoir, the heart, in a proper state and condition, since otherwise that which flows through the pipes must be tainted and corrupt. May the Holy Spirit now direct our meditations.

Mere moralists very often forget the heart, and deal exclusively with the lesser powers. Some of them say, “If a man's life be wrong it is better to alter the principles upon which his conduct is modelled: we had better adopt another scheme of living; society must be remodelled, so that man may have an opportunity for the display of virtues, and less temptation to indulge in vice.” It is as if, when the reservoir was filled with poisonous or polluted fluid, some sage counsellor should propose that all the piping had better be taken up, and fresh pipes laid down, so that the water might run through fresh channels; but who does not perceive that it would be all in vain, if the fountain-head were polluted, however good the channels. So in vain the rules by which men hope to fashion their lives; in vain the regimen by which we seek to constrain ourselves to the semblance of goodness.

unless the heart be right the very best scheme of life shall fall to the ground, and fail to effect its design. Others say, "Well, if the life be wrong, it would be better to set the understanding right: you must inform man's judgment, educate him, teach him better, and when his head is well informed, then his life will be improved." Now, *understanding* is, if I may use such a figure, the stop-cock which controls the emotions, lets them flow on, or stops them; and it is as if some very wise man, when a reservoir had been poisoned, proposed that there should be a new person employed to turn the water off or on, in hope that the whole difficulty would thus be obviated. If we followed his advice, if we found the wisest man in the world to have the control of the fountain, Mr. Understanding would still be incapable of supplying us with healthy streams, until we had first of all purged the cistern whence they flowed. The Arminian divine, too, sometimes suggests another way of improving man's life. He deals with the *will*. He says, the will must first of all be conquered, and if the will be right, then everything will be in order. Now, *will* is like the great engine which forces the water out of the fountain-head along the pipes, so that it is made to flow into our dwellings. The learned counsellor proposes that there should be a new steam-engine employed to force the water along the pipes. "If," says he, "we had the proper machinery for forcing the fluid, then all would be well." No, sir, if the stream be poisonous, you may have axles to turn on diamonds, and you may have a machine that is made of gold and a force as potent as Omnipotence, but even then you have not accomplished your purpose until you have cleansed the polluted fountain, and purged the issues of life which flow therefrom. The wise man in our text seems to say, "Beware of misapplying your energies, be careful to begin in the right place." It is very necessary the understanding should be right; it is quite needful the will should have its proper predominance; it is very necessary that you should keep every part of man in a healthy condition; but," says he, "if you want to promote true holiness, you must begin with the heart, for out of it are the issues of life; and when you have purged it, when you have made its waters pure and limpid, then shall the current flow and bless the inhabitants with clear water; but not till then." Here let us pause and ask the solemn and vital question, "Is my heart right in the sight of God?" For unless the inner man has been renewed by the grace of God, through the Holy Spirit, our heart is full of rottenness, filth, and abominations. And if so, here must all our cleansing begin, if it be real and satisfactory. Unrenewed men, I beseech you ponder the words of an ancient Christian which I here repeat in thine ear:—"It is no matter what is the sign, though an angel, that hangs without, if the devil and sin dwell within. New trimmings upon an old garment will not make it new, only give it a new appearance; and truly it is no good husbandry to bestow a great deal of cost in mending up an old suit, that will soon drop to tatters and rags, when a little more might purchase a new one that is lasting. And is it not better to labour to get a new heart, that all thou dost may be accepted, and thou saved, than to lose all the pains thou takest in religion, and thyself also for want of it?"

Now, ye who love the Lord, let me take you to the reservoir of your heart, and let me urge upon you the great necessity of keeping the heart right, if you would have the streams of your life happy for yourselves and beneficial to others.

I. First, keep the heart *full*. However pure the water may be in the central reservoir, it will not be possible for the company to provide us with an abundant supply of water, unless the reservoir itself be full. An empty fountain will most assuredly beget empty pipes; and let the machinery be never so accurate, let everything else be well ordered, yet if that reservoir be dry, we may wait in vain

for any of the water that we require. Now, you know many people—(you are sure to meet with them in your own society, and your own circle; for I know of no one so happy as to be without such acquaintances)—whose lives are just dry, good-for-nothing emptinesses. They never accomplish anything; they have no mental force; they have no moral power; what they say, nobody thinks of noticing; what they do is scarcely ever imitated. We have known fathers whose moral force has been so despicable, that even their children have scarcely been able to imitate them. Though imitation was strong enough in them, yet have they unconsciously felt, even in their childhood, that their father was, after all, but a child like themselves, and had not grown to be a man. Do you not know many people, who if they were to espouse a cause, and it were entrusted to them, would most certainly pilot it to shipwreck. Failure would be the total result. You could not use them as clerks in your office, without feeling certain that your business would be nearly murdered. If you were to employ them to manage a concern for you, you would be sure they would manage to spend all the money, but could never produce a doit. If they were placed in comfortable circumstances for a few months, they would go on carelessly till all was gone. They are just the flats, preyed on by the sharpers in the world; they have no manly strength, no power at all. See these people in religion: it does not matter much what are their doctrinal sentiments, it is quite certain they will never affect the minds of others. Put them in the pulpit: they are the slaves of the deacons, or else they are over-ridden by the church; they never have an opinion of their own, cannot come out with a thing; they have not the heart to say, "Such a thing is, and I know it is." These men just live on, but as far as any utility to the world is concerned, they might almost as well never have been created, except it were to be fed upon by other people. Now, some say that this is the fault of men's heads: "Such a one," they say, "could not get on; he had a small head; it was clean impossible for him to prosper, his head was small; he could not do anything; he had not enough force." Now, that may be true; but I know what was truer still—he had got a small heart and that heart was empty. For, mark you, a man's force in the world other things being equal, is just in the ratio of the force and strength of his heart. A full-hearted man is always a powerful man: if he be erroneous, then he is powerful for error; if the thing is in his heart, he is sure to make it notorious, even though it may be a downright falsehood. Let a man be never so ignorant, still if his heart be full of love to a cause, he becomes a powerful man for that object, because he has got heart-power, heart-force. A man may be deficient in many of the advantages of education, in many of those niceties which are so much looked upon in society; but once give him a good strong heart, that beats hard, and there is no mistake about his power. Let him have a heart that is right full up to the brim with an object, and that man will do the thing, or else he will die gloriously defeated, and will glory in his defeat. **HEART IS POWER.** It is the emptiness of men's hearts that makes them so feeble. Men do not feel what they are at. Now, the man in business that goes heart and soul into his business, is more likely to prosper than anybody else. That is the preacher we want, the man that has a full soul. Let him have a head—the more he knows the better; but, after all, give him a big heart; and when his heart beats, if his heart be full, it will, under God, either make the hearts of his congregation beat after him; or else make them conscious that he is labouring hard to compel them to follow. Oh! if we had more heart in our Master's service, how much more labour we could endure. You are a Sunday-school teacher, young man, and you are complaining that you cannot get on in the Sunday-school. Sir, the service-pipe would give out plenty of water if the heart were full. Perhaps you do not love your work. Oh, strive to love your work more, and then when your heart is full, you will go on well

enough. "Oh," saith the preacher, "I am weary of my work in preaching; I have little success; I find it a hard toil." The answer to that question is, "Your heart is not full of it, for if you loved preaching, you would breathe preaching, feed upon preaching, and find a compulsion upon you to follow preaching; and your heart being full of the thing, you would be happy in the employment. Oh for a heart that is full, and deep, and broad! Find the man that hath such a soul as that, and that is the man from whom the living waters shall flow, to make the world glad with their refreshing streams.

Learn, then, the necessity of keeping the heart full; and let the necessity make you ask this question—"But how can I keep my heart full? How can my emotions be strong? How can I keep my desires burning and my zeal inflamed?" Christian! there is one text which will explain all this. "All my springs are in thee," said David. If thou hast all thy springs in God, thy heart will be full enough. If thou dost go to the foot of Calvary, there will thy heart be bathed in love and gratitude. If thou dost frequent the vale of retirement, and there talk with thy God, it is there that thy heart shall be full of calm resolve. If thou goest out with thy Master to the hill of Olivet, and dost with him look down upon a wicked Jerusalem, and weep over it with him, then will thy heart be full of love for never-dying souls. If thou dost continually draw thine impulse, thy life, the whole of thy being from the Holy Spirit, without whom thou canst do nothing and if thou dost live in close communion with Christ, there will be no fear of thy having a dry heart. He who lives without prayer—he who lives with little prayer—he who seldom reads the Word—he who seldom looks up to heaven for a fresh influence from on high—he will be the man whose heart will become dry and barren; but he who calls in secret on his God—who spends much time in holy retirement—who delights to meditate on the words of the Most High—whose soul is given up to Christ—who delights in his fullness, rejoices in his all-sufficiency, prays for his second coming, and delights in the thought of his glorious advent—such a man, I say, must have an overflowing heart; and as his heart is, such will his life be. It will be a full life; it will be a life that will speak from the sepulchre, and wake the echoes of the future. "Keep thine heart with all diligence," and entreat the Holy Spirit to keep it full; for, otherwise, the issues of thy life will be feeble, shallow, and superficial; and thou mayest as well not have lived at all.

2. Secondly, it would be of little use for our water companies to keep their reservoirs full, if they did not also keep them *pure*. I remember to have read a complaint in the newspaper of a certain provincial town, that a tradesman had been frequently supplied with fish from the water company, large eels having crept down the pipe, and sometimes creatures a little more loathsome. We have known such a thing as water companies supplying us with solids when they ought to have given us nothing but pure crystal. Now, no one likes that. The reservoir should be kept pure and clean; and unless the water comes from a pure spring, and is not impregnated with deleterious substances, however full the reservoir may be, the company will fail of satisfying or of benefitting its customers. Now it is essential for us to do with our hearts as the company must do with its reservoir. We must keep our hearts pure; for if the heart be not pure, the life cannot be pure. It is quite impossible that it should be so. You see a man whose whole conversation is impure and unholy; when he speaks he lards his language with oaths; his mind is low and grovelling; none but the things of unrighteousness are sweet to him, for he has no soul above the kennel and the dunghill. You meet with another man who understands enough to avoid violating the decencies of life; but still, at the same time he likes filthiness; any low joke, anything that will in some way stir unholy thoughts is just the thing that he desires. For the ways of God he has no relish; in God's house he finds no pleasure, in his Word no delight. What is the cause of this? Say some, it is because of his family connexions—because of the situation in which he stands—because of his early education, and all that. No, no; the simple answer to that is the answer we gave to the other enquiry; the heart is not right; for, if the heart were pure, the life would be pure too. The unclean stream betrays the fountain. A valuable book of German parables, by old Christian Scriver, contains the following homely metaphor:—"A drink was brought to Gotthold, which tasted of the vessel in which it had been contained; and this led him to observe: We have here an emblem of our thoughts, words, and works. Our heart is defiled by sin, and hence a taint of sinfulness cleaves unfortunately

to everything we take in hand; and although, from the force of habit, this may be imperceptible to us, it does not escape the eye of the omniscient, holy, and righteous God." Whence come our carnality, covetousness, pride, sloth and unbelief? Are they not all to be traced to the corruption of our hearts? When the hands of a clock move in an irregular manner, and when the bell strikes the wrong hour, be assured there is something wrong within. Oh how needful that the mainspring of our motives be in proper order, and the wheels in a right condition.

Ah! Christian keep thy heart pure. Thou sayest, "How can I do this?" Well, there was of old a stream of Marah to which the thirsty pilgrims in the desert came to drink; and when they came to taste of it, it was so brackish that though there tongues were like torches, and the roofs of their mouths were parched with heat, yet they could not drink of that bitter water. Do you remember the remedy which Moses prescribed? It is the remedy which we prescribe to you this morning. He took a certain tree, and he cast it into the waters, and they became sweet and clear. Your heart is by nature like Marah's water, bitter and impure. There is a certain tree, you know its name, that tree, on which the Saviour hung, *the cross*. Take that tree, put it into your heart, and though it were even more impure than it is, that sweet cross, applied by the Holy Spirit, would soon transform it into its own nature and make it pure. Christ Jesus in the heart is the sweet purification. He is made unto us *sanctification*. Elijah cast salt into the waters; but we must cast the blood of Jesus there. Once let us know and love Jesus, once let his cross become the object of our adoration and the theme of our delight, the heart will begin its cleansing and the life will become pure also. Oh! that we all did learn the sacred lesson of fixing the cross in the heart! Christian man! love thy Saviour more; cry to the Holy Spirit that thou mayest have more affection for Jesus; and then, however gainful may be thy sin, thou wilt say with the poet,

"Now for the love I bear his name,
What was my gain I count my loss;
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to his cross."

The cross in the heart is the purifier of the soul; it purges and it cleanses the chambers of the mind. Christian! keep thy heart pure, "for out of it are the issues of life."

3. In the third place, there is one thing to which our water companies need never pay much attention; that is to say, if their water be pure, and the reservoir be full, they need not care to keep it *peaceable* and quiet, for let it be stirred to a storm, we should receive our water in just the same condition as usual. It is not so, however, with the heart. Unless the heart be kept peaceable, the life will not be happy. If calm doth not reign over that inner lake within the soul which feeds the rivers of our life, the rivers themselves will always be in storm. Our outward acts will always tell that they were born in tempests, by rolling in tempests themselves. Let us just understand this, *first*, with regard to ourselves. We all desire to lead a joyous life; the bright eye and the elastic foot are things which we each of us desire; to carry about a contented mind is that to which most men are continually aspiring. Let us all remember, that the only way to keep our life peaceful and happy is to keep the heart at rest; for come poverty, come wealth, come honour, come shame, come plenty, or come scarcity, if the heart be quiet there will be happiness anywhere. But whatever the sunshine and the brightness, if the heart be troubled the whole life must be troubled too. There is a sweet story told in one of the German martyrologies well worth both my telling and your remembering. A holy martyr who had been kept for a long time in prison, and had there exhibited to the wonderment of all who saw him the strongest constancy and patience, was at last, upon the day of his execution brought out, and tied to the stake preparatory to the lighting of the fire. While in this position, "he craved permission to speak once more to the judge, who, according to the Swiss custom, required to be also present at the execution. After repeatedly refusing, the judge at last came forward, when the peasant addressed him thus: You have this day condemned me to death. Now, I freely admit that I am a poor sinner, but positively deny that I am a heretic, because from my heart I believe and confess all that is contained in the Apostles' Creed (which he thereupon repeated from beginning to end). Now, then, sir, he proceeded to say, I have but one last request to make; which is,

that you will approach and place your hand, first upon my breast, and then upon your own, and afterwards frankly and truthfully declare, before this assembled multitude, which of the two, mine or yours, is beating most violently with fear and anxiety. For my part, I quit the world with alacrity and joy, to go and be with Christ, in whom I have always believed; what your feelings are at this moment is best known to yourself. The judge could make no answer, and commanded them instantly to light the pile. It was evident, however, from his looks, that he was more afraid than the martyr."

Now, keep your heart right. Do not let it smite you. The Holy Spirit says of David, "David's heart smote him." The smiting of the heart is more painful to a good man, than the rough blows of the fist. It is a blow that can be felt; it is iron that enters into the soul. Keep your heart in good temper. Do not let that get fighting with you. Seek that the peace of God which passeth all understanding may keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. Bend your knee at night, and with a full confession of sin, express your faith in Christ, then you may "dread the grave as little as your bed." Rise in the morning and give your heart to God, and put the sweet angels of perfect love and holy faith therein, and you may go into the world, and were it full of lions and of tigers, you would no more need to dread it than Daniel when he was cast into the lion's den. Keep the heart peaceable and your life will be happy.

Remember, in the *second* place, that it is just the same with regard to other men. I should hope we all wish to lead quiet lives, and as much as lieth in us to live peaceably with all men. There is a particular breed of men—I do not know where they come from, but they are mixed up now with the English race and to be met with here and there,—men who seem to be born for no other reason whatever but to fight—always quarreling; and never pleased. They say that all Englishmen are a little that way—that we are never happy unless we have something to grumble at, and that the worst thing that ever could be done with us would be to give us some entertainment at which we could not grumble, because we should be mortally offended, because we had not the opportunity of displaying our English propensities. I do not know whether that is true of us all, but it is true of some. You cannot sit with them in a room but they introduce a topic upon which you are quite certain to disagree with them. You could not walk with them half a mile along the public streets but they would be sure to make an observation against everybody and everything they saw. They talk about ministers: one man's doctrine is too high, another's is too low; one man they think is a great deal too effeminate and precise, another they say is vulgar they would not hear him at all. They say of another man that they do not think he attends to visiting his people; of another, that he visits so much that he never prepares for the pulpit. No one can be right for them.

Why is this? Whence arises this continual snarling? The heart must again supply the answer, they are morose and sullen in the inward parts, and hence their speech betrayeth them. They have not had their hearts brought to feel that God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth, or if they have felt that, they have never been brought to spell in their hearts—"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Whichever may have been put there of the other ten, the eleventh commandment was never written there. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." That they forgot. Oh! dear Christian people, seek to have your hearts full of love and if you have had little hearts till now that could not hold love enough for more than your own denomination, get your hearts enlarged, so that you may have enough to send out service pipes to all God's people throughout the habitable globe; so that whenever you meet a man who is a true born heir of heaven he has nothing to do but to turn the tap, and out of your loving heart will begin to flow issues of true, fervent, unconstrained, willing, living love. Keep thine heart peaceable, that thy life may be so; for out of the heart are the issues of life.

How is this to be done? We reply again, we must ask the Holy Spirit to pacify the heart. No voice but that which on Galilee's lake said to the storm "Be still," can ever lay the troubled waters of a stormy heart. No strength but Omnipotence can still the tempest of human nature. Cry out mightily unto him. He still sleeps in the vessel with his church. Ask him to awake, lest your plety should perish in the waters of contention. Cry unto him that he may give your heart peace and

happiness. Then shall your life be peaceful, spend ye it where ye may, in trouble or in joy.

4. A little further. When the water-works company have gathered an abundance of water in the reservoir, there is one thing they must always attend to, and that is, they must take care they do not attempt too much, or otherwise they will fail. Suppose they lay on a great main pipe in one place to serve one city, and another main pipe to serve another, and the supply which was intended to fill one channel is diverted into a score of streams, what would be the result? Why nothing would be done well, but everyone would have cause to complain. Now, man's heart is after all so little, that there is only one great direction in which its living water can ever flow; and my fourth piece of advice to you from this text is, *Keep your heart undivided*. Suppose you see a lake, and there are twenty or thirty streamlets running from it: why, there will not be one strong river in the whole country; there will be a number of little brooks which will be dried up in the summer, and will be temporary torrents in the winter. They will every one of them be useless for any great purposes, because there is not water enough in the lake to feed more than one great stream. Now, a man's heart has only enough life in it to pursue one object fully. Ye must not give half your love to Christ, and the other half to the world. No man can serve God and mammon because there is not enough life in the heart to serve the two. Alas! many people try this, and they fail both ways. I have known a man who has tried to let some of his heart run into the world, and another part he allowed to drip into the church, and the effect has been this: when he came into the church he was suspected of hypocrisy. "Why," they said, "if he were truly with us, could he have done yesterday what he did, and then come and profess so much to-day?" The church looks upon him as a suspicious one; or if he deceive them they feel he is not of much use to them, because they have not got all his heart. What is the effect of his conduct in the world? Why, his religion is a fetter to him there. The world will not have him, and the church will not have him; he wants to go between the two, and both despise him. I never saw anybody try to walk on both sides of the street but a drunken man: he tried it, and it was very awkward work indeed; but I have seen many people in a moral point of view try to walk on both sides of the street, and I thought there was some kind of intoxication in them, or else they would have given it up as a very foolish thing. Now, if I thought this world and the pleasures thereof worth my seeking, I would just seek them and go after them, and I would not pretend to be religious; but if Christ be Christ, and if God be God, let us give our whole hearts to him, and not go shares with the world. Many a church member manages to walk on both sides of the street in the following manner: His sun is very low indeed—it has not much light, not much heat, and is come almost to its setting. Now sinking suns cast long shadows, and this man stands on the world's side of the street, and casts a long shadow right across the road, to the opposite side of the wall just across the pavement. Ay, it is all we get with many o you. You come and you take the sacramental bread and wine; you are baptized; you join the church; and what we get is just your shadow; there is your substance on the other side of the street, after all. What is the good of the empty chrysalis of a man? And yet many of our church members are little better. They just do as the snake does that leaves its slough behind. They give us their slough, their skin, the chrysalis case in which life once was, and then they go themselves hither and thither after their own wanton wills; they give us the outward, and then give the world the inward. O how foolish this, Christian! Thy master gave himself wholly for thee; give thyself unreservedly to him. Keep not back part of the price. Make a full surrender of every motion of thy heart; labour to have but one object, and one aim. And for this purpose give God the keeping of thine heart. Cry out for more of the divine influences of the Holy Spirit, that so when thy soul is preserved and protected by him, it may be directed into one channel, and one only, that thy life may run deep and pure, and clear and peaceful; its only banks being God's will, its only channel the love of Christ and a desire to please him. Thus wrote Spencer in days long gone by: "Indeed, by nature, man's heart is a very divided, broken thing, scattered and parcelled out, a piece to this creature, and a piece to that lust. One while this vanity hires him, (as Leah did Jacob of Rachel,) anon when he hath done some drudgery for that, he lets out himself to another: thus divided is man and his affections. Now the elect, when God hath decreed to be vessels of honour,

consecrated for his holy use and service, he throws into the fire of his word, that being there softened and melted, he may by his transforming Spirit cast them anew, as it were, into a holy oneness; so that he who before was divided from God, and lost among the creatures, and his lusts, that shared him among them, now, his heart is gathered into God from them all; it looks with a single eye on God, and acts for him in all that he doth: if therefore thou wouldest know whether thy heart be sincere, inquire whether it be thus made anew."

5. Now, my last point is rather a strange one perhaps. Once upon a time, when one of our kings came back from a captivity, old historians tell us that there were fountains in Cheapside that did run with wine. So bounteous was the king, and so glad the people, that instead of water they made wine flow free to everybody. There is a way of making our life so rich, so full, so blessed to our fellow men, that the metaphor may be applicable to us, and men may say, that our life flows with wine when other men's lives flow with water. Ye have known some such men. There was a Howard. John Howard's life was not like our poor common lives: he was so benevolent, his sympathy with the race so self-denying, that the streams of his life were like generous wine. You have known another, an eminent saint, one who lived very near to Jesus: when you talked yourself, you felt your conversation was poor watery stuff; but when he talked to you, there was an unction and a savour about his words, a solidity and a strength about his utterances, which you could appreciate, though you could not attain unto it. You have sometimes said, "I wish my words were as full, as sweet, as mellow, and as unctionous as the words of such an one! Oh! I wish my actions were just as rich, had as deep a colour, and as pure a taste as the acts of so-and-so. All I can do seems but little and empty when compared with his high attainments. Oh, that I could do more! Oh, that I could send streams of pure gold into every house, instead of my poor dross." Well, Christian, this should teach thee to keep thine heart full of rich things. Never, never neglect the Word of God; that will make thy heart rich with precept, rich with understanding; and then thy conversation, when it flows from thy mouth, will be like thine heart, rich, unctionous, and savoury. Make thy heart full of rich, generous love, and then the stream that flows from thy hand will be just as rich and generous as thine heart. Above all, get Jesus to live in thine heart, and then out of thy belly shall flow rivers of living water, more rich, more satisfying than the water of the well of Sychar of which Jacob drank. Oh! go, Christian, to the great mine of riches, and cry unto the Holy Spirit to make thy heart rich unto salvation. So shall thy life and conversation be a boon to thy fellows; and when they see thee, thy face shall be as the angel of God. Thou shalt wash thy feet in butter and thy steps in oil: they that sit in the gate shall rise up when they see thee, and men shall do thee reverence.

But one single sentence, and we have done. Some of your hearts are not worth keeping. The sooner you get rid of them the better. They are hearts of stone. Do you feel to-day that you have a stony heart? Go home, and I pray the Lord hear my desire that thy polluted heart may be removed. Cry unto God and say, "Take away my heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh;" for a stony heart is an impure heart, a divided heart, an unpeaceful heart. It is a heart that is poor and poverty-stricken, a heart that is void of all goodness, and thou canst neither bless thyself nor others, if thy heart be such. O Lord Jesus! wilt thou be pleased this day to renew many hearts? Wilt thou break the rock in pieces, and put flesh instead of stone, and thou shalt have the glory, world without end!

The Evening Sermon (Nos. 180 & 181) contains a fuller Exposition of the Means of Keeping the Heart.

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION?

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 20TH, 1857,

BY THE REV. R. W. DIBDIN, M.A.,

AT WEST STREET EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, ST. GILES'S.

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"—Hebrews ii. 3.

BEFORE I explain the text, let me say that I am very thankful to God for the complete success of the experiment which I have been making during the last three months. I am very thankful to see so large an attendance at these lectures. I hope, my brethren, you, who occupy, and have occupied these galleries for the last twelve weeks, will, for the future, CONSIDER THEM AS YOUR OWN, not only in the evening, but also in the morning. It may be a loss in a pecuniary point of view; but, neither conscience nor inclination will allow me to part with so large an addition to my congregation. I would rather see five hundred persons paying nothing for their seats, than fifty persons paying £50 for theirs. Take, then, the seats, and be welcome to them. I ask only one favour in return; it is, that you come as often as you can—twice a day, if possible; but, if that is impracticable, come once. And may God, in his infinite mercy, grant that it may lead to our dwelling together in glory in the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour!

Before making a practical use of the text, let us take what I may call a strictly truthful view of its meaning. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" The epistle, you perceive, is addressed to the Hebrews. It is written to Jews by a Jew; and the greater part of it is meant to show that the new and better covenant which God promised to make with that people was sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ. The old covenant of works, which was to insure them, as a nation, great temporal blessings—that worldly and temporal covenant—was sealed by the blood of bulls and goats; but the everlasting covenant, the new covenant, was secured by better promises, and sealed by richer blood. The keeping of it was to rest, not with the Jews, but with Jehovah, not with man, but with God. "And so all Israel shall be saved." The old covenant, if it had been kept, wrought out salvation from worldly evils for the Jewish people; but the new covenant is intended to deliver them from sin, and its eternal punishment in the world to come. For, under the new covenant you read, they shall be all righteous and partakers of eternal happiness. When, therefore, the inspired writer says, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" being a Jew and writing to the Jews, for the moment he identifies himself with his nation, and says "we;" in other words, "How shall the Jews escape if they neglect so great salvation?" It is important to notice this; otherwise it might appear as if the inspired writer implied some doubt of his own salvation, and that it was possible for him not to escape, which is very far from being the case.

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION ?

I apprehend that the text forms, in the minds of some preachers, a reason for a habit they adopt, when addressing the unconverted, of modestly saying, "*We* ought to repent and believe in Christ; *we* ought to leave off our worldly conformity; *we* ought to betake ourselves to prayer and to the observance of the Sabbath." Probably, such preachers find, or think they find ground for their practice in the language of the text. They therefore take this form of address rather than the more direct and the more offensive mode—"Repent *you*; leave off *your* sins; forsake *your* evil companions." They put it in the more soft and pleasing form of—"Let *us* forsake our sins; let *us* forsake our evil companions." This is what many persons would consider to be charitable and right. Of course it gratifies drunkards and other sinners to hear the preacher classing himself with them; it is very agreeable to find themselves ranked in the best company, and, by implication, thought to be no worse than the very man who is preaching to him. I remember, many years ago, hearing a well-bred preacher of this kind go through a very able sermon, drawn up upon what an old writer calls, "this velvet-mouthed system of preaching." In the whole of his sermon he never presumed to say anything better of himself, nor of believers, than he did of the unconverted. It so happened that I sat in the same pew with a very wealthy gentleman, who was at the same time a very worldly-minded gentleman—one who, if there had been a distinction made between sinners and saints, could not have failed to class himself among the former. But no such distinction was made. While the courtly preacher spoke, indeed, words of truth as regards the Gospel of the living God, and pointed out the way of salvation, when he came to the application of the subject it was, *we, we, we*, from first to last—"We must repent, my brethren, if *we* will be forgiven; *we* must believe if *we* wish to be saved." When we left the church, my companion, who I hoped might have profited by hearing the Gospel of Christ, said to me these very words, "Now, that is what I call a godly sermon." Well, in many respects, said I, it was, "Yes, and it is a *charitable* sermon." How so? "You notice how he speaks with true humility; he does not say, as some people (meaning me), *you, you, you*; but he says, *us, us, us*." Well, said I, either what he says is true, or it is false. If it is true that *we* must repent, then *he* has not repented, and he has no business in the pulpit. If it is true what he says, that *we* must believe, then *he* has not believed, and he has no business to preach. If it is true that *we* must leave our wicked companions and our worldly ways, then *he* has not left those wicked companions and those worldly ways, and he has no business to preach. Let him learn to do himself what he recommends before he takes upon him to recommend to others. But if, as I am well persuaded—for I know very well the preacher's character—if he has believed and is living a godly life, then I think he only ministers to your pride, and does not properly discharge his duty when he says, "*We* must repent;" he should have said to you and such as you, "*You* ought to repent." With this, of course, my companion did not agree. Nor did I find, much as he liked the sermon, that it had any good effect upon him; not even by that coaxing way was he brought to forsake his sins or his worldly habits; nor, so far as I know, has he done it to this day.

As this is to be the last of this course of twelve sermons, the text is most suitable for general application, as a kind of windup to the whole. It speaks, you notice, of ESCAPE and NEGLECT:—"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

It speaks first of *escape*. "How shall we escape?" Escape what? Let Christ himself give us from his own lips to understand what is to be escaped. In Matthew xxiii. 33, we read—"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?" I doubt not that such critics, as I have alluded to in the above anecdote, if they had heard the words of Christ, would have thought him a very uncharitable preacher, and that it would have been better if he had said—however profane we may think it—"How shall *we* escape the damnation of hell?" But Christ was a truth-telling man in all things, and so he says, "How shall ye escape?" So the Apostle says, "How shall we escape if we neglect so

great salvation ?” He meant, to escape the wrath to come. It is, emphatically, wrath to come, for it will be to come for ever and ever ; when many ages are passed away, it will still be wrath to come ; it will be the carrying out of that condemnation which is already passed upon every one of the sons and daughters of Adam, who are still in their natural state. This is to be escaped ; but how ? Some propose one method, some another, and some get rid of the subject altogether. Some of the “ Broad Church ” divines, get rid of it by saying, that eternal punishment does not mean *endless* punishment ; and they quote some passages in the Old Testament where this word eternal is used in a qualified or modified sense, and thereby endeavour to show that, in the New Testament, when everlasting fire or everlasting punishment are spoken of, the Holy Ghost does not mean that it shall be an endless punishment. They misapply these passages of the Old Testament, and they endeavour to enforce their views by much of their own wisdom, by saying—“ From the nature of the case, God, as a Father, is far too merciful to send people into endless torment. The thought is abhorrent to our feelings, repulsive to our cultivated understanding.” Therefore, these philosophical preachers set aside the words of Christ, and of his disciples, and put in the place thereof their own dogma. In answer to them, let any honest man read the words of Christ himself, in Matthew xxv. 46—“ These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” I do not find that these philosophical Broad Church writers maintain that the happiness of the righteous shall come to an end. It is only the punishment of the wicked (*if punishment there be*, for some of them doubt even that), which they deny to be endless. I ask, is it honest to take this passage, “ These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal,” and say that the same word used in the two clauses, has not the same meaning ? It is the *same* word in both clauses, although for some reason or other, the translators have given two English words—eternal is Latin, and everlasting is English. But the word in the original Greek is the same, “ These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life.” Now, I ask, will any honest-minded man read these words and say, that Christ meant the righteous should have a reward that should never come to an end, but the wicked should have a punishment (if any) that should come to an end ? I should be very sorry to doubt the honesty of any man ; but here I must either doubt a man’s honesty or doubt his capacity, if he cannot come to the conclusion that the word “ everlasting,” in both clauses, signifies endless. He may take his choice. If he is so weak-minded that he cannot see it, he is no guide for you nor me ; and if he is so dishonest that he will not see it, he is still less fit to be a guide for you or me. This, then, is to be escaped—endless torment ; the bottomless Abyss prepared for the devil and his angles. Here, then, is the *Escape*.

The second part of our subject speaks of **NEGLECT**. And what is it they are said to neglect ? Salvation. “ How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ?” “ How shall sinners escape ?” that is to say, for we now accommodate the words. The Holy Ghost is speaking by the mouth of the writer to the Jews, and he says, “ How shall the Jews escape, who have crucified the Lord of Glory, who have set aside his pretensions, and yet he has risen again, and is at the right hand of God. How shall they escape as a nation, if they neglect so great salvation ?” They have not escaped up to this time. Generation after generation have perished in their sins, except such as, by the distinguishing mercy of God, have been brought to repent, and believe in that crucified and rejected Messiah. All the rest have perished in their sins. How could they escape when they neglected the great salvation ? We now *apply* the words to sinners amongst the Gentiles, and say to you, unconverted sinners, “ How shall *you* escape, if you neglect so great salvation ?”

But what is salvation ? The word salvation admits of three particular meanings. It hath many, but those with which you are particularly concerned are these :—1. Salvation from hell fire ; 2. Salvation from the dominion of sin ; and 3. Salvation from all evil of every kind. Now, this is the complete salvation which sinners

neglect. And when is it neglected? and how is it neglected? It might seem strange that men should neglect such good things. We find it is not so in any other matter. Let a man have the opportunity of being wealthy, in most instances he will not neglect it. Although, sometimes, the allurements of vice, in the shape of drunkenness or of indolence, or of some bad passion, yielded to and followed, may draw him aside; yet, as a general rule, if a man hath a very great advantage put within his reach, it is rare for him to neglect the use of the means which will secure him that advantage. Not so with salvation. It is offered freely to all, inasmuch as the atonement was made for all. I believe they are mistaken who would narrow this subject, and say that Christ redeemed only the elect; I believe that they are right who say that Christ redeemed all mankind. In this, I only repeat the language of that church, of which I am an unworthy minister, the Established Church of England. It says, "I believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world; in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind; in God the Holy Ghost, who hath sanctified me and all the elect people of God." Remark, "redeemed me *and all mankind*"—"ALL MANKIND." Now, I say, although it be true that Christ hath redeemed all men, you find that most men neglect that salvation which he has procured. How do they neglect it? By neglecting Christ himself. Christ is our salvation from first to last. So he was called, you remember, by holy Simeon, in Luke ii. 30, where it is said—"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." What had they seen? The infant Christ. That was God's salvation; a babe, then, but afterwards a man who died upon the cross. Christ is emphatically salvation. And not here alone, but in several other passages, he is called salvation, because he obtained salvation, and that too, in the three-fold sense which I have specified. To neglect Christ is to neglect salvation.

And what is it to neglect Christ? It is not to believe in him. Now, mark. There may be much in a man that seems like honouring Christ, and yet he is neglecting Christ. For instance, the Papists: they say much about Christ. Look at their Mass-houses, and you will see pictures of Christ, and images of Christ, in all directions. Look at their houses, and you will see figures of Christ crucified upon the cross. Hear them talk, and they will speak of Christ when they are speaking of religion. And it might be said, can these people be said to neglect Christ. Yes, because they do not believe on him. Christ does not accept any sort of honour, or any sort of worship, if it is not according to his own appointment. These men divide the honour between Christ and Mary, between Christ and the saints, and between Christ and themselves. They are not satisfied with the merits of Christ for their justification, but they must add to these merits the merits of Mary, and the merits of the saints, and their own merits. Thus, they make the work of Christ insufficient for the salvation of his people. Now, whatever they may profess, as to paying the greatest honour to Christ, he considers that they neglect him altogether. So again, they neglect Christ who, like the Socinians, or as they call themselves Unitarians—Unitarians! I wish men would be honest. They know very well that we are Unitarians as well as they. This last week, I saw two men parading the streets with two large placards announcing lectures to be preached in defence of Unitarianism! Why, I preach it myself. Unitarianism! why Paul preaches Unitarianism. What is Unitarianism? One God. *We* hold one God, and only one. And we hold Trinitarianism. What is Trinitarianism? Three persons in one God. We hold both, Unity and Trinity. It is dishonest to speak of themselves, therefore, as Unitarians. They ought to call themselves non-Trinitarians, if they want a name. A better name would be Socinians, because Socinius was the founder of this detestable sect—detestable in doctrine, I mean. They deny the atonement of Christ, and the Godhead of Christ. These men neglect Christ. They may say what they will about the perfect beauty of the moral example of Christ. They may draw the most lovely pictures of that great man, who went about doing good. They may set forth the most endearing views of the goodness, tenderness, diligence, and fruitfulness in

every good work and word of him who gave us a perfect example. But, with all that, they neglect Christ, because they do not receive him as God manifest in the flesh, an atonement for sin, a righteousness to justify, an advocate to plead, and a King to reign. So again, worldly-minded men, who are of no particular doctrine which is the case with a vast number of church-goers and chapel-goers, they neglect Christ. Ask them what is justification, and they will begin to think—"Justification! Well, it is something—in St. Paul I think it is—about Christ and the sinner." Ask them what is the atonement? "Oh, atonement! That is making amends." Who makes the atonement? "I don't know. Christ, I think, or else the sinner." I believe there are thousands of men, not ignorant of many other things, respectable, well-educated, morally-conducted persons, who are just as ignorant as that. Ask again, what is justification? "Ah," say some, "I don't like that. Methodists talk about that, and Puritans. I don't like sanctification; I like good works. I don't like sanctification, and the Holy Spirit, and all that." Yet, these men call themselves Christians. They neglect Christ. They may say, as they do say, "Our Saviour, our merciful Saviour." But they are not saved; for is he not their Saviour, nor will he be while they remain in that condition. Then, again, there are the high professors of evangelical doctrine; men that talk about the everlasting covenant, redemption, imputed sanctification, and final perseverance, and apply it all to themselves, and say, "The elect shall be saved let them do what they will"—men that talk in that way of Christ, and never copy his life. To tell them that the justified are holy in their lives is as wormwood. Sanctification is a matter with which they feel no sympathy at all. They love to have the privileges, but they dislike the duties; they like to be elect, but they do not wish to be holy. You will find them say, holiness means election, sanctification means imputed sanctification; and thus by a perverse ingenuity they explain away, and wrest to their own destruction, the Word of God. Such men, with ungoverned tempers, with wasted hours, with useless lives, spent in talking, and reading, and writing, and so employing themselves to pass away their time agreeably, may talk of Christ from morning to night, but yet they neglect Christ. Every man neglects Christ, who does not copy the example of him who was meek and lowly in heart, who was industrious—up with the dawn to do good, late in the night, that he might continue in prayer. All these men, I say, neglect Christ, and therefore neglect salvation.

Christmas day is coming. We shall soon see how men show they honour Christ, and from that we shall learn who it is that really neglects Christ. I have given notice that the Lord's Supper will be administered here next Friday morning. Many will attend, I doubt not, in the good providence of God; but very many more will not. You, what will you do? You know what you intend to do, I suppose. Very many more than they who attend the Lord's Supper on that day will be found celebrating the birth of Christ with drunkenness and dancing, and theatres and revelry, and such like. This is the way in which they will show that they honour Christ. It will not be by prayer, by alms-giving, and mercy to the poor; by holy duties, discharged conscientiously and in believing dependence upon the help of the Holy Ghost, that they may do all things, whatsoever they do, to the honour and glory of God; but it will be to gratify the flesh, with its affections and lusts; to fall in with the world and its pomps and vanity; and to fulfil the will of the Devil, who is seeking to lead them in these paths. That is the way in which the far greater part of those who call themselves Christians will endeavour to show they are not neglecting Christ; that is the way in which they will mark their observance of the birth of Christ. I am a father; I do not know what I should say or feel if I found, when my birthday came, every child of mine, instead of showing me dutiful kindness to prove that it loved me (as they do, to the youngest), if every one of these children were to set about doing that thing which I most abhorred—one come to me and tell a lie, another tear my sermon to tatters, another be disobedient to its mother—each doing what would be most offensive to my feelings. If I were to say, "What abominable

conduct ! I never saw anything like this before." What should I think if my child were to say, "Why, it is to celebrate your birthday?" Such conduct would be more like a fiend's than a human being's. Yet, that will be the way in which some of you will celebrate the birth of Christ. What if Christ came, and found you eating and drinking to excess on the day of his birth, and engaged in the licentious ball-room—for it is licentious to be half naked—what if he came and found you in a theatre, sitting with the vilest of the vile?—what if he came and found you engaged in these and such like amusements at Christmas? What would he say? "Wherefore do you this?" Would you reply, "Oh, it is Christmas, the time when you were laid in the manger; you did not refuse to take upon you the likeness of sinful flesh, and to suffer therein for my sins; and I am doing this for your honour?" "What, by trampling upon my precepts, by forsaking my ordinances, by neglecting my worship, by setting me at defiance?" Think of that when you are at your Christmas amusements, every one of you. Do you mean to go to the merry dance? take that to help you when you hear the lively tune. Do you mean to go and sit in the theatre? take that, and think of it when you see the gay dresses and gaudy exhibitions; when you hear the profane prayers of the tragedian, and the lewd jest of the comedian. If you mean to drink much more than you ought to drink, when you are giving your toasts, take this with you, and remember that Christ considers you are neglecting him all that time. Nay, it is more than neglect; it is downright insult. By far the greatest amount of Christmas amusement is neither more nor less than downright insult to the Lord Jesus Christ—doing the thing he hates, and then saying, it is to celebrate his birth! Such persons will not escape. God forbid that I should shut the door of mercy in any man's face; but, living as they live, if they finish their lives in that fashion they shall not escape, for they neglect the great salvation. They only shall escape who believe in him, and, therefore, lead holy lives, unworldly lives.

Now, concerning these, we observe, as touching the great salvation spoken of, that they already have two. They have, first, salvation from the wrath to come. He that believeth is saved, as regards the eternal punishment of sins. "By grace are ye saved, through faith"—not to be saved, but, *are* ye saved. "He that believeth hath everlasting life." Faith obtains full, free, and everlasting forgiveness.

And they have salvation in the second sense—viz., deliverance from the dominion of sin. Sin is a hard master. "The way of transgressors is hard," says Solomon, or rather the Holy Ghost, by Solomon. How true! Never, hardly, a day passes—certainly not a week—but I see proofs of it. They that serve the Devil serve a bad master; he gives very poor pay; and he gives very, very hard work, and follows it with damnation. Some little pay he gives now—something of pleasure, something of mirth and jollity, something to satisfy the flesh; but, take it altogether, a sinner's life is a hard life, especially amongst the poor; I have found that. Even for this life, upon the whole, a man had better serve God than the Devil. I do not mean if he is to get rich; perhaps, for this end, he had better serve the Devil. But, apart from that, if he wants, upon the whole, a happier life, he had better serve God. He may not be, and probably will not be, so well off in this world. My experience confirms me in this, that, as a general rule, they are much worse off who serve God than they would have been if they had not served him, in a money point of view. Notwithstanding, if I am asked, whose ways are ways of greater pleasantness, a saint's, or a sinner's? I reply that to serve God will yield greater happiness than to serve the Devil. It is true Christians have their trials in this wilderness world. I have, and so have you; notwithstanding, there is that in a godly life which outweighs all troubles, because you can see the end of them. There is that in peace with God which far outweighs anything that comes out of the creature—there is that which sustains under bereavement, persecution, bodily pain in the hour of death, and in the prospect of judgment—there is that which can sustain the heart. The spirit of a man can sustain much, but who can bear a wounded

spirit? The man overtaken by sickness or calamity, may take to the maddening excitement of drink to drown his care. The poor man is only adding to his misery thereby. For a little moment it may satisfy, but shortly he finds it adds to the former evil. Thus, the course of the wicked is, on the whole, a less happy course than the course of the righteous.

Next, I say the child of God is safe from the dominion of sin. In that sense he is saved. I do not say he is saved from sin; I feel it necessary to confess sin every day. But I say he is saved from the dominion of sin. He does not serve sin, a hard master, but an unconverted man does. No unconverted man is sure of what he will do to-morrow. He is in the Devil's hands. He may commit murder, poison his mother, strangle his wife in twenty-four hours, or in one hour. The sinner is taken captive by the Devil. Now, think, you who are neglecting Christ and living at ease, you may be plunged at any moment into any atrocity! Here is a miserable condition! David and Peter committed great sin; but in them there was a recovering power. God will not leave his children there when they fall down; he will raise them up, and wash them in the blood of his Son. He does not so with the wicked. As they fall, so shall they lie; as they are, so shall they be for ever and ever. Oh, Satan is a hard master. He gives little satisfaction in this life compared with the trouble he gives! Then, again, look at the ill-temper of ungodly men; at their envy! and look at the unsatisfied ambition of ungodly men! A man will strain all his powers, and use all his influence to attain some point of distinction in his particular profession. He gets it. Is he happy? Is he satisfied? No. Why not? Somebody has passed before him, and got something better still. He envies that man; like Haman in the story of Esther, he goes to his wife, and says, "I have this, and this, but it availeth me nothing as long as I see Mordecai sitting in the gate." So it is with a worldly man. God makes his cup of blessings to overflow. The blessings are turned into curses, the cup is turned bitter because another has more than himself. Then, again, think of the suspicious, vile turn in many ungodly men's minds. They think every man their enemy; they are always looking out for offences; always thinking that others want to injure them. Ah, what a wretched life! All men live more or less sorrowful lives. Life is a vale of tears; but as for the ungodly, take them altogether, it is often deeply so to them! And what will it be in the life to come? They are under the dominion of sin, which makes them miserable here, and will make them a hundredfold more so in the world to come. The righteous man is delivered from that. Sin is not his master. Sin is his enemy, his persecutor, sometimes alas! his companion, but never his master.

There is a third sense in which the righteous have salvation; and that is, eternal deliverance from all evil of every kind, both physical and moral, both as regards the body and as regards the soul. Nothing to suffer in the way of sickness and grief; nothing to defile in the way of temptation. That is the third sense of salvation; when Christ is to come again a second time, without sin, unto salvation. It is spoken of in Hebrews ix. 28:—"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." There is the third and greatest salvation. Now, this is THE salvation, when Christ appears in his glory to take his people to himself, and make them like himself. Christ came to deliver us from hell; and he is gone into heaven to intercede and preserve us from the dominion of sin; and he is coming again a second time unto salvation to deliver us from all evil.

That second coming is very beautifully typified in the Old Testament theology. On the great day of the Atonement the high priest went into the Holy of Holies, taking the blood of the sacrifice, and disappearing from the multitude, who saw him go into the presence of Jehovah, there to present the blood. He made the Atonement, sprinkling the blood and offering incense. That was typical of Christ going into the presence of God for us, bearing not the blood of bulls and goats, but his own blood. There he is now. Well, what then? He is to come a second time; he is to come again from the presence of God unto our salvation.

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION ?

And there shall be sounds of joy, and hearts thrilling with ecstasy. The trumpet shall sound, no terrible sound, but with heavenly melody to say to the waiting people of God, "come up higher."

Now, two words of APPLICATION.

I. To the sinner. Neglect no longer. Up to this time you have neglected. You have your plans for Christmas. Here I especially speak to young people. Young people think much of Christmas day, but it is mostly with little thought of Christ. Although his name is in the word, they will think of the Christmas Pantomime, or of the Christmas party, or of the Christmas ball, or of some other enjoyment; but, as for Christ upon the cross, Christ in heaven, Christ coming again—of this they will think but little. And yet, my brethren, what does Christmas profit if it does not bring men to think of that? Think of it, my brethren. Neglect him no longer, lest the time come, as surely it will to millions, when your neglect shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.

II. You, beloved in Christ, have escaped—you have escaped the wrath to come, and though you feel and confess yourselves to be vile, hell-deserving sinners, yet you have escaped the dominion of sin:—"Sin shall have no dominion over you." Oh, what a blessed condition is it for a man who feels the poison of sin rankling in his heart, and flowing in his veins, and working in his brain—what a blessing it is for that man yet to know that sin shall not have dominion over him! It may wrestle and struggle with him, and it may trip him up, and make him fall, and drag him out of the right path, but it shall not have dominion over him.

Finally, brethren, you shall enter upon salvation, which is to be revealed when sin shall cease for ever—when you shall be for ever in the company of the saved elect church of God; where trial shall never be, nor temptation; where fear shall never be, nor doubt; but where the redeemed of the Lord shall come with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, and they shall sing praises unto him, who has saved them by his blood, justified them by his righteousness, preserved them by his providence, and brought them to glory!

NOTE.—This sermon is the last of twelve preached upon the texts selected for the bishops, deans, and other eminent clergymen who attracted such great congregations at Exeter-hall in 1857. The author expresses his regret that the discourse on "Who, then, can be saved?" has been strongly objected to by some whose station, learning, and character, entitle them to his highest respect and admiration. Nothing could be further from his wish than to make "statements likely to be greatly misunderstood and to do mischief," and "to produce impressions which are contrary to the tone of Scripture." After a laborious life of study and preaching for twenty-five years in the ministry, it would be matter of the deepest distress to find his preaching calculated to "set the poor against the rich;" and he would humbly ask pardon both of God and man should his "want of caution" tend to produce so abominable a result. He intended to make the poor contented with their station rather than envious of the rich. He cannot, however, but avow his conviction, after long and careful observation, that the possessors of great wealth are, in this country at least, in little danger of losing their influence or the deference they so generally receive, not only from the poor, but from all classes. The danger of the present day seems to be contempt for constituted authority and hereditary rank. Money is worshipped, while the claims of high birth and real talent are depreciated. I say, with the late excellent Sir Robert Harry Inglis, who said, "I have learned to respect the aristocracy of birth, and the aristocracy of genius, but I feel little respect for the aristocracy of money."

The New Park Street Pulpit.

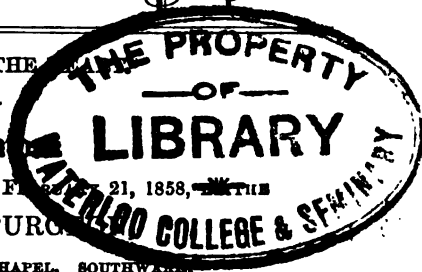
HOW TO KEEP THE

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, FEBRUARY 21, 1858, AT THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.



"The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—Philippians iv. 7.

It is remarkable that when we find an exhortation given to God's people in one part of the Holy Scripture, we almost invariably find the very thing which they are exhorted to do guaranteed to them, and provided for them, in some other part of the same blessed volume. This morning my text was, "Keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Now, this evening we have the promise upon which we must rest if we desire to fulfil the precept:—"The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

This evening we shall use another figure distinct from the one used in the morning of the *reservoir*. We shall use the figure of a *fortress* which is to be kept. And the promise saith that it shall be kept—kept by "the peace of God which passeth all understanding through Christ Jesus."

Inasmuch as the heart is the most important part of man—for out of it are the issues of life—it would be natural to expect that Satan, when he intended to do mischief to manhood, would be sure to make his strongest and most perpetual attacks upon the heart. What we might have guessed in wisdom is certainly true in experience; for although Satan will tempt and try us in every way, though every gate of the town of Mansoul may be battered, though against every part of the walls thereof he will be sure to bring out his great guns, yet the place against which he levels his deadliest malice and his most furious strength, is the heart. Into the heart, already of itself evil enough, he thrusts the seeds of every evil thing, and doth his utmost to make it a den of unclean birds, a garden of poisonous trees, a river flowing with destructive water. Hence, again, arises the second necessity that we should be doubly cautious in keeping the heart with all diligence; for if, on the one hand, it be the most important, and, on the other hand, Satan, knowing this, makes his most furious and determined attacks against it, then, with double force the exhortation comes, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." And the promise also becomes doubly sweet from the very fact of the double danger—the promise which says, "The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus our Lord."

We shall notice, first of all, *that which keeps the heart and mind*. Secondly, we shall note *how to obtain it*—for we are to understand this promise as connected with certain precepts which come before it. And then, when we have had this, we shall

try to show how it is true that the peace of God does keep the mind free from the attacks of Satan, or delivers it from those attacks when they are made.

I. First, then, beloved, the preservation which God in this promise confers upon the saints, is "THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING," to keep us through Jesus Christ. It is called PEACE; and we are to understand this in a double sense. There is a peace of God which exists between the child of God and God his Judge, a peace which may be truly said to pass all understanding. Jesus Christ has offered so all-sufficient a satisfaction for all the claims of injured justice, that now God hath no fault to find with his children. "He seeth no sin in Jacob, nor iniquity in Israel;" nor is he angry with them on account of their sins—a peace unbroken and unspeakable being established by the atonement which Christ hath made on their behalf.

Hence flows a peace experienced in the conscience, which is the second part of this peace of God: for, when the conscience sees that God is satisfied, and is no longer at war with it, then it also becomes satisfied with man; and conscience, which was wont to be a great disturber of the peace of the heart, now gives its verdict of acquittal, and the heart sleeps in the arms of conscience, and finds a quiet resting-place there. Against the child of God conscience brings no accusation, or if it brings the accusation, it is but a gentle one—a gentle chiding of a loving friend who hints that we have done amiss, and that we had better change, but doth not afterwards thunder in our ears the threat of a penalty. Conscience knows full well that peace is made betwixt the soul and God, and, therefore, it does not hint that there is any thing else but joy and peace to be looked forward to by the believer. Do we understand anything of this double peace? Let us pause here and ask ourselves a question upon this doctrinal part of the matter—Let us make it an experimental question with our own hearts:—"Come, my soul, art thou at peace with God? Hast thou seen thy pardon signed and sealed with the Redeemer's blood? Come, answer this, my heart; hast thou cast thy sins upon the head of Christ, and hast thou seen them all washed away in the crimson streams of blood? Canst thou feel that now there is a lasting peace between thyself and God, so that, come what may, God shall not be angry with thee—shall not condemn thee—shall not consume thee in his wrath, nor crush thee in his hot displeasure? If it be so, then, my heart, thou canst scarcely need to stop and ask the second question—Is my conscience at peace? For, if my heart condemn me not, God is greater than my heart, and doth know all things; if my conscience bears witness with me, that I am a partaker of the precious grace of salvation, then happy am I! I am one of those to whom God hath given the peace which passeth all understanding. Now, why is this called "the peace of God?" We suppose it is because it comes from God—because it was planned by God—because God gave his Son to make the peace—because God gives his Spirit to give the peace in the conscience—because, indeed, it is God himself in the soul, reconciled to man, whose is the peace. And while it is true that this man shall have the peace—even the Man-Christ, yet we know it is because he was the God-Christ that he was our peace. And hence we may clearly perceive how Godhead is mixed up with the peace which we enjoy with our Maker and with our conscience.

Then we are told that it is "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." What does he mean by this? He means such a peace that the understanding can never understand it, can never attain to it. The understanding of mere carnal man can never comprehend this peace. He who tries with a philosophic look to discover the secret of the Christian's peace, finds himself in a maze. "I know not how it is, nor why it is," saith he; "I see these men hunted through the earth; I turn the pages of history, and I find them hunted to their graves. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented; yet I also see upon

the Christian's brow a calm serenity. I cannot understand this; I do not know what it is. I know that I myself, even in my merriest moments, am disturbed; that when my enjoyments run the highest, still there are waves of doubt and fear across my mind. Then why is this? How is it that the Christian can attain a rest so calm, so peaceful, and so quiet?" Understanding can never get to that peace which the Christian hath attained. The philosopher may teach us much; he can never give us rules whereby to reach the peace that Christians have in their conscience. Diogenes may tell us to do without everything, and may live in his tub, and then think himself happier than Alexander, and that he enjoys peace; but we look upon the poor creature after all, and though we may be astonished at his courage, yet we are obliged to despise his folly. We do not believe that even when he had dispensed with everything, he possessed a quiet of mind, a total and entire peace, such as the true believer can enjoy. We find the greatest philosophers of old laying down maxims for life which they thought would certainly promote happiness. We find that they were not always able to practise them themselves; and many of their disciples, when they laboured hard to put them in execution, found themselves encumbered with impossible rules to accomplish impossible objects. But the Christian man does with faith what a man can never do himself. While the poor understanding is climbing up the crags, faith stands on the summit; while the poor understanding is getting into a calm atmosphere, faith flies aloft and mounts higher than the storm, and then looks down on the valley and smiles while the tempest blows beneath its feet. Faith goes further than understanding, and the peace which the Christian enjoys is one which the worldling cannot comprehend and cannot himself attain. "The peace of God which passeth all understanding."

And this peace is said to "keep the mind through Christ Jesus." Without Christ Jesus this peace would not exist; without Christ Jesus this peace, even where it has existed, cannot be maintained. Daily visits from the Saviour, continual lookings by the eye of faith to him that bled upon the cross, continual drawings from his ever-flowing fountain, make this peace broad, and long, and enduring. But take Christ Jesus, the channel of our peace away, and it fades and dies, and droops, and comes to nought. A Christian hath no peace with God except through the atonement of his Lord Jesus Christ.

I have thus gone over what some will call the dry doctrinal part of the subject—"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." I cannot show you what that peace is, if you have never felt it; but yet I think I could tell you where to look for it, for I have sometimes seen it. I have seen the Christian man in the depths of poverty, when he lived from hand to mouth, and scarcely knew where he should find the next meal, still with his mind unruffled, calm, and quiet. If he had been as rich as an Indian prince, yet could he not have had less care; if he had been told that his bread should always come to his door, and the stream which ran hard by should never dry—if he had been quite sure that ravens would bring him bread and meat in the morning, and again in the evening, he would not have been one whit more calm. There is his neighbour on the other side of the street not half so poor, but wearied from morning to night, working his fingers to the bone, bringing himself to the grave with anxiety; but this poor good man, after having industriously laboured, though he found he had gained little with all his toil, yet hath sanctified his little by prayer, and hath thanked his Father for what he had; and though he doth not know whether he will have more, still he trusted in God, and declared that his faith should not fail him, though providence should run to a lower ebb than he had ever seen. There is "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." I have seen that peace, too, in the case of those who have lost their friends. There is a widow—her much loved husband lies in the coffin; she is soon to part with him.

Parted with him she has before; but now, of his poor clay-cold corpse—even of that she has to be bereaved. She looks upon it for the last time, and her heart is heavy. For herself and her children, she thinks how they shall be provided for. That broad tree that once sheltered them from the sunbeam has been cut down. Now, she thinks there is a broad heaven above her head, and her Maker is her husband; the fatherless children are left with God for their father, and the widow is trusting in him. With tears in her eyes she still looks up, and she says, "Lord, thou hast given and thou hast taken away, blessed be thy name." Her husband is carried to the tomb; she doth not smile, but though she weeps, there is a calm composure on her brow, and she tells you she would not have it otherwise, even if she could, for Jehovah's will is right. There, again, is "the peace of God that passeth all understanding." Picture another man. There is Martin Luther standing up in the midst of the Diet of Worms; there are the kings and the princes, and there are the bloodhounds of Rome with their tongues thirsting for his blood—there is Martin rising in the morning as comfortable as possible, and he goes to the Diet, and delivers himself of the truth, solemnly declares that the things which he has spoken are the things which he believes, and God helping him, he will stand by them till the last. There is his life in his hands; they have him entirely in their power. The smell of John Huss's corpse has not yet passed away, and he recollects that princes, before this, have violated their words; but there he stands, calm and quiet; he fears no man, for he has naught to fear; "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ." There is another scene: there is John Bradford in Newgate. He is to be burned the next morning in Smithfield, and he swings himself on the bedpost in very glee, and delights, for to-morrow is his wedding day; and he says to another, "Fine shining we shall make to-morrow, when the flame is kindled." And he smiles and laughs, and enjoys the very thought that he is about to wear the blood-red crown of martyrdom. Is Bradford mad! Ah, no; but he has got the peace of God that passeth all understanding. But perhaps the most beautiful, as well as the most common illustration of this sweet peace, is the dying bed of the believer. Oh, brethren, you have seen this sometimes—that calm, quiet serenity; you have said, Lord, let us die with him. It has been so good to be in that solitary chamber where all was quiet, and so still, all the world shut out, and heaven shut in, and the poor heart nearing its God, and far away from all its past burdens and griefs—now nearing the portals of eternal bliss. And ye have said, "How is this? Is not death a black and grim thing? Are not the terrors of the grave things which make the strong man tremble?" Oh yes, they are; but, then, this one has the "peace of God which passeth all understanding." However, if you want to know about this, you must be a child of God, and possess it yourselves; and when you have once felt it, when you can stand calm amid the bewildering cry, confident of victory, when you can sing in the midst of the storm, when you can smile when surrounded by adversity, and can trust your God, be your way ne'er so rough, ne'er so stormy; when you can always repose confidence in the wisdom and goodness of Jehovah, then it is you will have "the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

II. Thus we have discussed the first point, what is this peace? Now the second thing was, **HOW IS THIS PEACE TO BE OBTAINED?** You will note that although this is a promise, it hath precepts preceding, and it is only by the practice of the precepts that we can get the promise. Turn now, to the fourth verse, and you will see the first rule and regulation for getting peace. Christian, would you enjoy "the peace of God which passeth all understanding?"

The first thing you have to do is to "rejoice evermore." The man who never rejoices, but who is always sorrowing, and groaning, and crying, who forgets his God, who forgets the fulness of Jehovah, and is always murmuring concerning the

trials of the road and the infirmities of the flesh, that man will lose the prospect of enjoying a peace that passeth all understanding. Cultivate, my friends, a cheerful disposition; endeavour, as much as lieth in you, always to bear a smile about with you; recollect that this is as much a command of God as that one which says, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart." "Rejoice evermore," is one of God's commands; and it is your duty, as well as your privilege, to try and practise it. Not to rejoice, remember, is a sin. To rejoice, is a duty, and such a duty that the richest fruits and the best rewards are appended to it. Rejoice always, and then the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds. Many of us, by giving way to disastrous doubts, spoil our peace. It is as I once remember to have heard a woman say, when I was passing down a lane; a child stood crying at the door, and I heard her calling out, "Ah, you are crying for nothing; I will give you something to cry for." Brethren, it is often so with God's children. They get crying for nothing. They have a miserable disposition, or a turn of mind always making miseries for themselves, and thus they have something to cry for. Their peace is disturbed, some sad trouble comes, God hides his face, and then they lose their peace. But keep on singing, even when the sun does not keep on shining; keep a song for all weathers; get a joy that will stand clouds and storms; and then, when you know how always to rejoice, you shall have this peace.

The next precept is, "Let your moderation be known unto all men." If you would have peace of mind, be moderate. Merchant, you cannot push that speculation too far, and then have peace of mind. Young man, you cannot be so fast in trying to rise in the world, and yet have the peace of God which passeth all understanding. You must be moderate, and when you have got a moderation in your desires, then you shall have peace. Sir, you with the red cheek, you must be moderate in your anger. You must not be quite so fast in flying into a passion with your fellows, and not quite so long in getting cool again; because the angry man cannot have peace in his conscience. Be moderate in that; let your vengeance stay itself; for if you give way to wrath, if you are angry, "be ye angry and sin not." Be moderate in this; be moderate in all things which thou undertakest, Christian; moderate in your expectations. Blessed is he who expects little, for he shall have but little disappointment. Remember, never to set thy desires very high. He that has aspirations to the moon, will be disappointed if he only reaches half as high; whereas, if he had aspired lower, he would be agreeably disappointed when he found himself mounting higher than he first expected. Keep moderation, whatsoever you do, in all things, but in your desires after God; and so shall you obey the second precept, and get the glimpse of this promise, "The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."

The last precept that you have to obey is, "be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication make known your requests unto God." You cannot have peace unless you turn your troubles up. You have no place in which to pour your troubles except the ear of God. If you tell them to your friends, you but put your troubles out a moment, and they will return again. If you tell them to God, you put your troubles into the grave; they will never rise again when you have committed them to him. If you roll your burden anywhere else it will roll back again, just like the stone of Sisyphus; but just roll your burden unto God, and you have rolled it into a great deep, out of which it will never by any possibility rise. Cast your troubles where you have cast your sins; you have cast your sins into the depth of the sea, there cast your troubles also. Never keep a trouble half an hour on your own mind before you tell it to God. As soon as the trouble comes, quick, the first thing, tell it to your Father.

Remember, that the longer you take telling your trouble to God, the more your peace will be impaired. The longer the frost lasts, the more likely the ponds will be frozen. Your frost will last till you go to the sun; and when you go to God—the sun, then your frost will soon become a thaw, and your troubles will melt away. But do not be long, because the longer you are in waiting, the longer will your trouble be in thawing afterwards. Wait a long while till your trouble gets frozen thick and firm, and it will take many a day of prayer to get your trouble thawed again. Away to the throne as quick as ever you can. Do as the child did, when he ran and told his mother as soon as his little trouble happened to him; run and tell your Father the first moment you are in affliction. Do this in everything, in every little thing—"in everything by prayer and supplication make known your wants unto God." Take your husband's head-ache, take your children's sicknesses, take all things, little family troubles as well as great commercial trials—take them all to God; pour them all out at once. And so by an obedient practice of this command in everything making known your wants unto God, you shall preserve that peace "which shall keep your heart and mind through Jesus Christ."

These, then, are the precepts. May God the Holy Spirit enable us to obey them, and we shall then have the continual peace of God.

III. Now, the third thing was to show **HOW THE PEACE**, which I attempted to describe in the first place, **KEEPS THE HEART**. You will clearly see how this peace will keep the heart full. That man who has continued peace with God, will not have an empty heart. He feels that God has done so much for him that he must love his God. The eternal basis of his peace lays in divine election—the solid pillars of his peace, the incarnation of Christ, his righteousness, his death—the climax of his peace, the heaven hereafter where his joy and his peace shall be consummated; all these are subjects for grateful reflection, and will, when meditated upon, cause more love. Now, where much love is, there is a large heart and a full one. Keep, then, this peace with God, and thou wilt keep thy heart full to the brim. And, remember, that in proportion to the fulness of thine heart will be the fulness of thy life. Be empty-hearted and thy life will be a meagre, skeleton existence. Be full-hearted and thy life will be full, fleshy, gigantic, strong, a thing that will tell upon the world. Keep, then, thy peace with God firm within thee. Keep thou close to this, that Jesus Christ hath made peace between thee and God. And keep thy conscience still; then shall thy heart be full and thy soul strong to do thy Master's work. Keep thy peace with God. This will keep thy heart pure. Thou wilt say if temptation comes, "What dost thou offer me? Thou offerest me pleasure; lo! I have got it. Thou offerest me gold; lo! I have got it; all things are mine, the gift of God; I have a city that hands have not made, 'a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' I will not barter this for your poor gold." "I will give you honour," saith Satan. "I have honour enough," says the peaceful heart; "God will honour me in the last great day of his account." "I will give thee everything that thou canst desire," saith Satan. "I have everything that I can desire," says the Christian.

"I nothing want on earth;
Happy in my Saviour's love,
I am at peace with God."

Avaunt, then, Satan! While I am at peace with God, I am a match for all thy temptations. Thou offerest me silver; I have gold. Thou bringest before me the riches of the earth; I have something more substantial than these. Avaunt, tempter of human kind! Avaunt, thou fiend! Your temptations and blandishments are lost on one who has peace with God. This peace, too, will keep the

heart undivided. He who has peace with God will set his whole heart on God. "Oh!" says he, "why should I go to seek anything else on earth, now that I have found my rest in God? As the bird by wandering, so should I be if I went elsewhere. I have found a fountain; why should I go and drink at the broken cistern that will hold no water? I lean on the arm of my beloved; why should I rest on the arm of another? I know that religion is a thing worth my following; why should I leave the pure snows of Lebanon to follow something else? I know and feel that religion is rich when it brings forth to me a hundredfold the fruits of peace; why should I go and sow elsewhere? I will be like the maiden Ruth, I will stop in the fields of Boaz. Here will I ever stay and never wander."

Again, this peace keeps the heart rich. My hearers will notice that I am passing over the heads of the morning's discourse, and showing how this peace fulfils the requisites that we thought necessary in the morning. Peace with God keeps the heart rich. The man who doubts and is distressed has got a poor heart; it is a heart that has nothing in it. But when a man has peace with God, his heart is rich. If I am at peace with God I am enabled to go where I can get riches. The throne is the place where God gives riches. If I am at peace with him, then I can have access with boldness. Meditation is a great and another field of enrichment. When my heart is at peace with God, then I can enjoy meditation; but if I have not peace with God, then I cannot meditate profitably; for "the birds come down on the sacrifice," and I cannot drive them away, except my soul is at peace with God. Hearing the word is another way of getting rich. If my mind is disturbed I cannot hear the word with profit. If I have to bring my family into the chapel; if I have to bring my business, my ships, or my horses, I cannot hear. When I have cows, and dogs, and horses in the pew, I cannot hear the Gospel preached. When I have got a whole week's business, and a ledger on my heart, I cannot hear then; but when I have peace, peace concerning all things, and rest in my Father's will, then I can hear with pleasure, and every word of the gospel is profitable to me; for my mouth is empty, and I can fill it with the heavenly treasures of his Word. So you see the peace of God is a soul-enriching thing. And because it keeps the heart rich, thus it is it keeps the heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord. I need hardly say that the peace of God fulfils the only other requisite which I did not mention, because it was unnecessary to do so. It keeps the heart always peaceable. Of course, peace makes it full of peace—peace like a river, and righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Now, then, brother and sister, it is of the first importance that you keep your heart aright. You cannot keep your heart right but by one way. That one way is by getting, maintaining, and enjoying peace of God to your own conscience. I beseech you then, you that are professors of religion, do not let this night pass over your heads till you have a confident assurance that you are now the possessor of the peace of God. For let me tell you, if you go out to the world next Monday morning without first having peace with God in your own conscience, you will not be able to keep your heart during the week. If this night, ere you rest, you could say that with God as well as all the world you are at peace, you may go out to-morrow, and whatever your business, I am not afraid for you. You are more than a match for all the temptations to false doctrine, to false living, or to false speech that may meet you. For he that has peace with God is armed *cap-a-pie*; he is covered from head to foot in a panoply. The arrow may fly against it, but it cannot pierce it, for peace with God is a mail so strong that the broad sword of Satan itself may be broken in twain ere it can pierce the flesh. Oh! take care that you are at peace with God; for if you are not, you ride forth to to-morrow's fight unarmed, naked; and God help the man that is unarmed when he has to fight with hell and earth.

Oh, be not foolish, but "put on the whole armour of God," and then be confident for you need not fear.

As for the rest of you, you cannot have peace with God, because "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." How shall I address you. As I said this morning, I cannot exhort you to keep your hearts. My best advice to you is, to get rid of your hearts, and as soon as you can, to get new ones. Your prayer should be, "Lord, take away my stony heart, and give me a heart of flesh." But though I cannot address you from this text, I may address you from another. Though your heart is bad, there is another heart that is good; and the goodness of that heart is a ground of exhortation to you. You remember Christ said, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden;" and then his argument would come to this, "for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." Your heart is proud, and high, and black, and lustful; but look at Christ's heart, it is meek and lowly. There is your encouragement. Do you feel to-night your sin? Christ is meek; if you come to him he will not spurn you. Do you feel your insignificance and worthlessness? Christ is lowly; he will not despise you. If Christ's heart were like your heart, you would be damned to a certainty. But Christ's heart is not as your heart, nor his ways like your ways. I can see no hope for you when I look into your hearts, but I can see plenty of hope when I look into Christ's heart.

Oh, think of his blessed heart; and if you go home to night sad and sorrowful, under a sense of sin, when you go to your chamber, shut to your door—you need not be afraid—and talk to that heart so meek and lowly; and though your words be ungrammatical, and your sentences incoherent, he will hear and answer you from heaven, his dwelling place; and when he hears, he will forgive and accept, for his own name's sake.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

PARTICULAR REDEMPTION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 28, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."—Matthew xx. 28.

WHEN first it was my duty to occupy this pulpit, and preach in this hall, my congregation assumed the appearance of an irregular mass of persons collected from all the streets of this city to listen to the Word. 'Twas then simply an evangelist, preaching to many who had not heard the gospel before. By the grace of God, the most blessed change has taken place; and now, instead of having an irregular multitude gathered together, my congregation is as fixed as that of any minister in the whole city of London. I can from this pulpit observe the countenances of my friends, who have occupied the same places, as nearly as possible, for these many months; and I have the privilege and the pleasure of knowing that a very large proportion, certainly three-fourths of the persons who meet together here, are not persons who stray hither from curiosity, but are my regular and constant hearers. And observe, that my character also has been changed. From being an evangelist, it is now my business to become your pastor. You were once a motley group assembled to listen to me, but now we are bound together by the ties of love; through association we have grown to love and respect each other, and now you have become the sheep of my pasture, and members of my flock; and I have now the privilege of assuming the position of a pastor in this place, as well as in the chapel where I labour in the evening. I think, then, it will strike the judgment of every person, that as both the congregation and the office have now changed, the teaching itself should in some measure suffer a difference. It has been my wont to address you from the simple truths of the gospel; I have very seldom, in this place, attempted to dive into the deep things of God. A text which I have thought suitable for my congregation in the evening, I should not have made the subject of discussion in this place in the morning. There are many high and mysterious doctrines which I have often taken the opportunity of handling in my own place, that I have not taken the liberty of introducing here, regarding you as a company of people casually gathered together to hear the Word. But now, since the circumstances are changed, the teaching will be changed also. I shall not now simply confine myself to the doctrine of the faith, or the teaching of believer's baptism; I shall not stay upon the surface of matters, but shall venture, as God shall guide me, to enter into those things that lie at the basis of the religion that we hold so dear. I shall not blush to preach before you the doctrine of God's Divine Sovereignty; I shall not stagger to preach in the most unreserved and unguarded manner the doctrine of Election. I shall not be afraid to propound the great truth of the final perseverance of the saints; I shall not withhold that undoubted truth of Scripture, the effectual calling of God's elect; I shall endeavour, as God shall help me, to keep back nothing from you who have become my flock. Seeing that many of you have now "tasted that the Lord is gracious," we will endeavour to go through the whole system of the doctrines of grace, that saints may be edified and built up in their most holy faith.

I begin this morning with the doctrine of Redemption. "He gave his life a ransom for many."

The doctrine of Redemption is one of the most important doctrines of the system of faith. A mistake on this point will inevitably lead to a mistake through the entire system of our belief.

Now, you are aware that there are different theories of Redemption. All Christians hold that Christ died to redeem, but all Christians do not teach the same redemption. We differ as to the nature of atonement, and as to the design of redemption. For instance, the Arminian holds that Christ, when he died, did not die with an intent to save any particular person; and they teach that Christ's death does not in itself secure, beyond doubt, the salvation of any one man living. They believe that Christ died to make the salvation of all men possible, or that by the doing of something else, any man who pleases may attain unto eternal life; consequently, they are obliged to hold that if man's will would not give way and voluntarily surrender to grace, then Christ's atonement would be unavailing. They hold that there was no particularity and speciality in the death of Christ. Christ died, according to them, as much for Judas in hell as for Peter who mounted to heaven. They believe that for those who are consigned to eternal fire, there was as true and real a redemption made as for those who now stand before the throne of the Most High. Now, we believe no such thing. We hold that Christ, when he died, had an object in view, and that object will most assuredly, and beyond a doubt, be accomplished. We measure the design of Christ's death by the effect of it. If any one asks us, "What did Christ design to do by his death?" we answer that question by asking him another—"What has Christ done, or what will Christ do by his death?" For we declare that the measure of the effect of Christ's love, is the measure of the design of it. We cannot so belie our reason as to think that the intention of Almighty God could be frustrated, or that the design of so great a thing as the atonement, can by any way whatever, be missed of. We hold—we are not afraid to say what we believe—that Christ came into this world with the intention of saving "a multitude which no man can number;" and we believe that as the result of this, every person for whom he died must, beyond the shadow of a doubt, be cleansed from sin, and stand, washed in blood, before the Father's throne. We do not believe that Christ made any effectual atonement for those who are for ever damned; we dare not think that the blood of Christ was ever shed with the intention of saving those whom God foreknew never could be saved, and some of whom were even in hell when Christ, according to some men's account, died to save them.

I have thus just stated our theory of redemption, and hinted at the differences which exist between two great parties in the professing church. It shall be now my endeavour to show the greatness of the redemption of Christ Jesus; and by so doing, I hope to be enabled by God's Spirit, to bring out the whole of the great system of redemption, so that it may be understood by us all, even if all of us cannot receive it. For you must bear this in mind, that some of you, perhaps, may be ready to dispute things which I assert; but you will remember that this is nothing to me; I shall at all times teach those things which I hold to be true, without let or hindrance from any man breathing. You have the like liberty to do the same in your own places, and to preach your own views in your own assemblies, as I claim the right to preach mine, fully, and without hesitation.

Christ Jesus "gave his life a ransom for many;" and by that ransom he wrought out for us a great redemption. I shall endeavour to show the greatness of this redemption, measuring it in five ways. We shall note its greatness, first of all, *from the heinousness of our own guilt*, from which he hath delivered us; secondly, we shall measure his redemption *by the sternness of divine justice*; thirdly, we shall measure it *by the price which he paid*, the pangs which he endured; then we shall endeavour to magnify it, by noting *the deliverance which he actually wrought out*; and we shall close by noticing *the vast number for whom this redemption is made*, who in our text are described as "many."

I. First, then, we shall see that the redemption of Christ was no little thing, if we do but measure it, first, by our own sins. My brethren, for a moment look at the hole of the pit whence ye were digged, and the quarry whence ye were hewn. Ye, who have been washed, and cleansed, and sanctified, pause for a moment, and look back at the former state of your ignorance; the sins in which you indulged,

the crimes into which you were hurried, the continual rebellion against God in which it was your habit to live. One sin can ruin a soul for ever; it is not in the power of the human mind to grasp the infinity of evil that slumbereth in the bowels of one solitary sin. There is a very infinity of guilt couched in one transgression against the majesty of heaven. If, then, you and I had sinned but once, nothing but an atonement infinite in value could ever have washed away the sin and made satisfaction for it. But has it been once that you and I have transgressed? Nay, my brethren, our iniquities are more in number than the hairs of our head; they have mightily prevailed against us. We might as well attempt to number the sands upon the sea-shore, or count the drops which in their aggregate do make the ocean, as attempt to count the transgressions which have marked our lives. Let us go back to our childhood. How early we began to sin! How we disobeyed our parents, and even then learned to make our mouth the house of lies! In our childhood, how full of wantonness and waywardness we were! Headstrong and giddy, we preferred our own way, and burst through all restraints which godly parents put upon us. Nor did our youth sober us. Wildly we dashed, many of us, into the very midst of the dance of sin. We became leaders in iniquity; we not only sinned ourselves, but we taught others to sin. And as for your manhood, ye that have entered upon the prime of life, ye may be more outwardly sober, ye may be somewhat free from the dissipation of your youth; but how little has the man become bettered! Unless the sovereign grace of God hath renewed us, we are now no better than we were when we began; and even if it has operated, we have still sins to repent of, for we all lay our mouths in the dust, and cast ashes on our head, and cry, "Unclean! Unclean! And oh! ye that lean wearily on your staff, the support of your old age, have ye not sins still clinging to your garments? Are your lives as white as the snowy hairs that crown your head? Do you not still feel that transgression besmears the skirts of your robe, and mars its spotlessness? How often are you now plunged into the ditch, till your own clothes do abhor you! Cast your eyes over the sixty, the seventy, the eighty years, during which God hath spared your lives; and can ye for a moment think it possible, that ye can number up your innumerable transgressions, or compute the weight of the crimes which you have committed? O ye stars of heaven! the astronomer may measure your distance and tell your height, but O ye sins of mankind! ye surpass all thought. O ye lofty mountains! the home of the tempest, the birth-place of the storm! man may climb your summits and stand wonderingly upon your snows; but ye hills of sin! ye tower higher than our thoughts; ye chasms of transgressions! ye are deeper than our imagination dares to dive. Do you accuse me of slandering human nature? It is because you know it not. If God had once manifested your heart to yourself, you would bear me witness, that so far from exaggerating, my poor words fail to describe the desperateness of our evil. Oh! if we could each of us look into our hearts to-day—if our eyes could be turned within, so as to see the iniquity that is graven as with the point of the diamond upon our stony hearts, we should then say to the minister, that however he may depict the desperateness of guilt, yet can he not by any means surpass it. How great then, beloved, must be the ransom of Christ, when he saved us from all these sins! The men for whom Jesus died, however great their sin, when they believe, are justified from all their transgressions. Though they may have indulged in every vice and every lust which Satan could suggest, and which human nature could perform, yet once believing, all their guilt is washed away. Year after year may have coated them with blackness, till their sin hath become of double dye; but in one moment of faith, one triumphant moment of confidence in Christ, the great redemption takes away the guilt of numerous years. Nay, more, if it were possible for all the sins that men have done, in thought, or word, or deed, since worlds were made, or time began, to meet on one poor head—the great redemption is all-sufficient to take all these sins away, and wash the sinner whiter than the driven snow.

Oh! who shall measure the heights of the Saviour's all-sufficiency? First, tell how high is sin, and, then, remember that as Noah's flood prevailed over the tops of earth's mountains, so the flood of Christ's redemption prevails over the tops of the mountains of our sins. In heaven's courts there are to-day men that once were murderers, and thieves, and drunkards, and whoremongers, and blasphemers, and persecutors; but they have been washed—they have been sanctified. Ask them whence the brightness of their robes hath come, and where their purity hath been achieved, and they, with united breath, tell you that they have washed their

robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. O ye troubled consciences ! O ye weary and heavy-laden ones ! O ye that are groaning on account of sin ! the great redemption now proclaimed to you is all-sufficient for your wants ; and though your numerous sins exceed the stars that deck the sky, here is an atonement made for them all—a river which can overflow the whole of them, and carry them away from you for ever.

This, then, is the first measure of the atonement—the greatness of our guilt.

II. Now, secondly, we must measure the great redemption BY THE STERNNESS OF DIVINE JUSTICE. "God is love," always loving ; but my next proposition does not at all interfere with this assertion. *God is sternly just*, inflexibly severe in his dealings with mankind. The God of the Bible is not the God of some men's imagination, who thinks so little of sin that he passes it by without demanding any punishment for it. He is not the God of the men who imagine that our transgressions are such little things, such mere peccadilloes that the God of heaven winks at them, and suffers them to die forgotten. No ; Jehovah, Israel's God, hath declared concerning himself, "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." It is his own declaration, "I will by no means clear the guilty." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Learn ye, my friends, to look upon God as being as severe in his justice as if he were not loving, and yet as loving as if he were not severe. His love does not diminish his justice, nor does his justice, in the least degree, make warfare upon his love. The two things are sweetly linked together in the atonement of Christ. But, mark, we can never understand the fulness of the atonement till we have first grasped the Scriptural truth of God's immense justice. There was never an ill word spoken, nor an ill thought conceived, nor an evil deed done, for which God will not have punishment from some one or another. He will either have satisfaction from you, or else from Christ. If you have no atonement to bring through Christ, you must for ever lie paying the debt which you never can pay, in eternal misery ; for as surely as God is God, he will sooner lose his Godhead than suffer one sin to go unpunished, or one particle of rebellion unrevenged. You may say that this character of God is cold, and stern, and severe. I cannot help what you say of it ; it is nevertheless true. Such is the God of the Bible ; and though we repeat it is true that he is love, it is no more true that he is love than that he is full of justice, for every good thing meets in God, and is carried to perfection, whilst love reaches to consummate loveliness, justice reaches to the sternness of inflexibility in him. He has no bend, no warp in his character ; no attribute so predominates as to cast a shadow upon the other. Love hath its full away, and justice hath no narrower limit than his love. Oh! then, beloved, think how great must have been the substitution of Christ, when it satisfied God for all the sins of his people. For man's sin God demands eternal punishment ; and God hath prepared a hell into which he casts those who die impenitent. Oh! my brethren, can ye think what must have been the greatness of the atonement which was the substitution for all this agony which God would have cast upon us, if he had not poured it upon Christ. Look! look! look with solemn eye through the shades that part us from the world of spirits, and see that house of misery which men call hell ! Ye cannot endure the spectacle. Remember that in that place there are spirits for ever paying their debt to divine justice ; but though some of them have been for these four thousand years sweltering in the flame, they are no nearer a discharge than when they began ; and when ten thousand times ten thousand years shall have rolled away, they will no more have made satisfaction to God for their guilt than they have done up till now. And now can you grasp the thought of the greatness of your Saviour's mediation when he paid your debt, and paid it all at once ; so that there now remaineth not one farthing of debt owing from Christ's people to their God, except a debt of love. To justice the believer oweth nothing ; though he owed originally so much that eternity would not have been long enough to suffice for the paying of it, yet, in one moment Christ did pay it all, so that the man who believeth is entirely justified from all guilt, and set free from all punishment, through what Jesus hath done. Think ye, then, how great his atonement if he hath done all this.

I must just pause here, and utter another sentence. There are times when God the Holy Spirit shows to men the sternness of justice in their own consciences. There is a man here to-day who has just been cut to the heart with a sense of sin. He was once a free man, a libertine, in bondage to none ; but now the arrow of the Lord sticks fast in his heart, and he has come under a bondage worse than that of

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Egypt. I see him to-day, he tells me that his guilt haunts him everywhere. The negro slave, guided by the pole star, may escape the cruelties of his master and reach another land where he may be free; but this man feels that if he were to wander the wide world over he could not escape from guilt. He that hath been bound by many irons, can yet find a file that can unbind him and set him at liberty; but this man tells you that he has tried prayers and tears and good works, but cannot get the gyves from his wrist; he feels as a lost sinner still, and emancipation, do what he may, seems to him impossible. The captive in the dungeon is sometimes free in thought, though not in body; through his dungeon walls his spirit leaps, and flies to the stars, free as the eagle that is no man's slave. But this man is a slave in his thoughts; he cannot think one bright, one happy thought. His soul is cast down within him; the iron has entered into his spirit, and he is sorely afflicted. The captive sometimes forgets his slavery in sleep, but this man cannot sleep; by night he dreams of hell, by day he seems to feel it; he bears a burning furnace of flame within his heart, and do what he may he cannot quench it. He has been confirmed, he has been baptised, he takes the sacrament, he attends a church or he frequents a chapel, he regards every rubric and obeys every canon, but the fire burns still. He gives his money to the poor, he is ready to give his body to be burned, he feeds the hungry, he visits the sick, he clothes the naked, but the fire burns still, and do what he may he cannot quench it. O, ye sons of weariness and woe, this that you feel is God's justice in full pursuit of you, and happy are you that you feel this, for now to you I preach this glorious Gospel of the blessed God. You are the man for whom Jesus Christ has died; for you he has satisfied stern justice; and now all you have to do to obtain peace and conscience, is just to say to your adversary who pursues you, "Look you there! Christ died for me; my good works would not stop you, my tears would not appease you: look you there! There stands the cross; there hangs the bleeding God! Hark to his death-shriek! See him die! Art thou not satisfied now?" And when thou hast done that, thou shalt have the peace of God which passeth all understanding, which shall keep thy heart and mind through Jesus Christ thy Lord; and then shalt thou know the greatness of his atonement.

III. In the third place, we may measure the greatness of Christ's Redemption by THE PRICE HE PAID.

It is impossible for us to know how great were the pangs of our Saviour; but yet some glimpse of them will afford us a little idea of the greatness of the price which he paid for us. O Jesus, who shall describe thine agony?

"Come, all ye springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes; come, clouds and rain!
My grief hath need of all the wat'ry things,
That nature hath produc'd. Let ev'ry vein
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,
My weary weeping eyes; too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
To bear them out, and with my state agree."

O Jesus! thou wast a sufferer from thy birth, a man of sorrows and grief's acquaintance. Thy sufferings fell on thee in one perpetual shower, until the last dread hour of darkness. Then not in a shower, but in a cloud, a torrent, a cataract of grief, thine agonies did dash upon thee. See him yonder! It is a night of frost and cold; but he is all abroad. It is night: he sleeps not, but he is in prayer. Hark to his groans! Did ever man wrestle as he wrestles? Go and look in his face! Was ever such suffering depicted upon mortal countenance as you can there behold? Hear his own words? "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He rises: he is seized by traitors and is dragged away. Let us step to the place where just now he was engaged in agony. O God! and what is this we see? What is this that stains the ground? It is blood! Whence came it? Had he some wound which oozed afresh through his dire struggle? Ah! no. "He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground." O agonies that surpass the word by which we name you! O sufferings that cannot be compassed in language! What could ye be that thus could work upon the Saviour's blessed frame, and force a bloody sweat to fall from his entire body? This is the beginning; this is the opening of the tragedy. Follow him mournfully, thou sorrowing church,

to witness the consummation of it. He is hurried through the streets; he is dragged first to one bar and then to another; he is cast and condemned before the Sanhedrim; he is mocked by Herod; he is tried by Pilate. His sentence is pronounced—"Let him be crucified!" And now the tragedy cometh to its height. His back is bared; he is tied to the low Roman column; the bloody scourge ploughs furrows on his back, and with one stream of blood his back is red—a crimson robe that proclaims him emperor of misery. He is taken into the guard room; his eyes are bound, and then they buffet him, and say, "Prophecy, who it was that smote thee!" They spit into his face; they plait a crown of thorns, and press his temples with it; they array him in a purple robe; they bow their knees, and mock him. All silently he sits; he answers not a word. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again," but committed himself unto him whom he came to serve. And now they take him, and with many a jeer and jibe they drive him from the place, and hurry him through the streets. Emaciated by continual fastings, and depressed with agony of spirit he stumbles beneath his cross." Daughters of Jerusalem! he faints in your streets. They raise him up; they put his cross upon another's shoulders, and they urge him on, perhaps with many a spear-prick, till at last he reaches the mount of doom. Rough soldiers seize him, and hurl him on his back; the transverse wood is laid beneath him; his arms are stretched to reach the necessary distance; the nails are grasped; four hammers at one moment drive four nails through the tenderest parts of his body; and there he lies upon his own place of execution dying on his cross. It is not done yet. The cross is lifted by the rough soldiers. There is the socket prepared for it. It is dashed into its place: they fill up the place with earth; and there it stands.

But see the Saviour's limbs, how they quiver! Every bone has been put out of joint by the dashing of the cross into that socket! How he weeps! How he sighs! How he sobs! Nay, more, hark how at last he shrieks in agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" O sun, no wonder thou didst shut thine eye, and look no longer upon a deed so cruel! O rocks! no wonder that ye did melt and rend your hearts with sympathy, when your Creator died! Never man suffered as this man suffered. Even death itself relented, and many of those who had been in their graves arose and came into the city. This however, is but the outward. Believe me, brethren, the inward was far worse. What our Saviour suffered in his body was nothing, compared to what he endured in his soul. You cannot guess, and I cannot help you to guess, what he endured within. Suppose for one moment—to repeat a sentence I have often used—suppose a man who has passed into hell—suppose his eternal torment could all be brought into one hour; and then suppose it could be multiplied by the number of the saved, which is a number past all human enumeration. Can you now think what a vast aggregate of misery there would have been in the sufferings of all God's people, if they had been punished through all eternity? And recollect that Christ had to suffer an equivalent for all the hells of all his redeemed. I can never express that thought better than by using those oft-repeated words; it seemed as if hell was put into his cup; he seized it, and, "At one tremendous draught of love, he drank damnation dry." So that there was nothing left of all the pangs and miseries of hell for his people ever to endure. I say not that he suffered the same, but he did endure an equivalent for all this, and gave God the satisfaction for all the sins of all his people, and consequently gave him an equivalent for all their punishment. Now can ye dream, can ye guess the great redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ?

IV. I shall be very brief upon the next head. The fourth way of measuring the Saviour's agonies is this: we must compute them by THE GLORIOUS DELIVERANCE WHICH HE HAS EFFECTED.

Rise up, believer; stand up in thy place, and this day testify to the greatness of what the Lord hath done for thee! Let me tell it for thee. I will tell thy experience and mine in one breath. Once my soul was laden with sin; I had revolted against God, and grievously transgressed. The terrors of the law gat hold upon me; the pangs of conviction seized me. I saw myself guilty. I looked to heaven, and I saw an angry God sworn to punish me; I looked beneath me and I saw a yawning hell ready to devour me. I sought by good works to satisfy my conscience; but all in vain. I endeavoured by attending to the ceremonies of religion to appease the pangs that I felt within; but all without effect. My soul was exceeding sorrowful, almost unto death. I could have said with the ancient mourner, "My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life." This was the great question that always

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perplexed me: "I have sinned; God must punish me; how can he be just if he does not? Then, since he is just, what is to become of me?" At last mine eye turned to that sweet word which says, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." I took that text to my chamber; I sat there and meditated. I saw one hanging on a cross. It was my Lord Jesus. There was the thorn-crown, and there the emblems of unequalled and peerless misery. I looked upon him, and my thoughts recalled that word which says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Then said I within myself, "Did this man die for sinners? I am a sinner; then he died for me. Those he died for he will save. He died for sinners; I am a sinner; he died for me; he will save me." My soul relied upon that truth. I looked to him, and as I "viewed the flowing of his soul-redeeming blood," my spirit rejoiced, for I could say,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to this cross I cling;
Naked look to him for dress;
Helpless, come to him for grace!
Black, I to this fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die!"

And now, believer, you shall tell the rest. The moment that you believed, your burden rolled from your shoulder, and you became light as air. Instead of darkness you had light; for the garments of heaviness you had the robes of praise. Who shall tell your joy since then? You have sung on earth, hymns of heaven, and in your peaceful soul you have anticipated the eternal Sabbath of the redeemed. Because you have believed you have entered into rest. Yes, tell it the wide world over; they that believe, by Jesus' death are justified from all things from which they could not be freed by the works of the law. Tell it in heaven, that none can lay anything to the charge of God's elect. Tell it upon earth, that God's redeemed are free from sin in Jehovah's sight. Tell it even in hell, that God's elect can never come there; for Christ hath died for them, and who is he that shall condemn them?

V. I have hurried over that, to come to the last point, which is the sweetest of all. Jesus Christ, we are told in our text, came into the world "to give his life a ransom for many." The greatness of Christ's redemption may be measured by the extent of the design of it. He gave his life "a ransom for many." I must now return to that controverted point again. We are often told (I mean those of us who are commonly nicknamed by the title of Calvinists—and we are not very much ashamed of that; we think that Calvin, after all, knew more about the gospel than almost any man who has ever lived, uninspired)—We are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ, because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men, or all men would be saved. Now, our reply to this is, that, on the other hand, our opponents limit it: we do not. The Arminians say, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, "No, certainly not." We ask them the next question—Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They answer "No." They are obliged to admit this, if they are consistent. They say "No; Christ has died that any man may be saved if"—and then follow certain conditions of salvation. We say, then, we will just go back to the old statement—Christ did not die so as beyond a doubt to secure the salvation of anybody, did he? You must say "No;" you are obliged to say so, for you believe that even after a man has been pardoned, he may yet fall from grace, and perish. Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why, you. You say that Christ did not die so as to infallibly secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon, when you say we limit Christ's death; we say, "No, my dear sir, it is you that do it. We say Christ so died that he infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ's death not only may be saved, but are saved, must be saved, and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. You are welcome to your atonement; you may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it.

Now, beloved, when you hear any one laughing or jeering at a limited atonement, you may tell him this. General atonement is like a great wide bridge with only half

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an arch; it does not go across the stream : it only professes to go half way; it does not secure the salvation of anybody. Now, I had rather put my foot upon a bridge as narrow as Hungerford, which went all the way across, than on a bridge that was as wide as the world, if it did not go all the way across the stream. I am told it is my duty to say that all men have been redeemed, and I am told that there is a Scriptural warrant for it—"Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Now, that looks like a very, very great argument indeed on the other side of the question. For instance, look here. "The whole world is gone after him." Did all the world go after Christ? "Then went all Judea, and were baptized of him in Jordan." Was all Judea, or all Jerusalem baptized in Jordan? "Ye are of God, little children," and "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Does "the whole world" there mean everybody? If so, how was it, then, that there were some who were "of God"? The words "world" and "all" are used in some seven or eight senses in Scripture; and it is very rarely that "all" means all persons, taken individually. The words are generally used to signify that Christ has redeemed some of all sorts—some Jews, some Gentiles, some rich, some poor, and has not restricted his redemption to either Jew or Gentile.

Leaving controversy, however, I will now answer a question. Tell me then, sir, who did Christ die for? Will you answer me a question or two, and I will tell you whether he died for you. Do you want a Saviour? Do you feel that you need a Saviour? Are you this morning conscious of sin? Has the Holy Spirit taught you that you are lost? Then Christ died for you, and you will be saved. Are you this morning conscious that you have no hope in the world but Christ? Do you feel that you of yourself cannot offer an atonement that can satisfy God's justice? Have you given up all confidence in yourselves? And can you say upon your bended knees, "Lord, save, or I perish?" Christ died for you. If you are saying this morning, "I am as good as I ought to be; I can get to heaven by my own good works," then, remember, the Scripture says of Jesus, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." So long as you are in that state I have no atonement to preach to you. But if this morning you feel guilty, wretched, conscious of your guilt, and are ready to take Christ to be your only Saviour, I can not only say to you that you may be saved, but what is better still, that you will be saved. When you are stripped of everything but hope in Christ, when you are prepared to come empty-handed and take Christ to be your all, and to be yourself nothing at all, then you may look up to Christ, and you may say, "Thou dear, thou bleeding Lamb of God! thy griefs were endured for me; by thy stripes I am healed, and by thy sufferings I am pardoned." And then see what peace of mind you will have; for if Christ has died for you, you cannot be lost. God will not punish twice for one thing. If God punished Christ for your sin, he will never punish you. "Payment, God's justice cannot twice demand, first, at the bleeding surety's hand, and then again at mine." We can to day, if we believe in Christ, march to the very throne of God, stand there, and if it is said, "Art thou guilty?" we can say, "Yes, guilty." But if the question is put, "What have you to say why you should not be punished for your guilt?" We can answer, "Great God, thy justice and thy love are both our guarantees that thou wilt not punish us for sin; for didst thou not punish Christ for sin for us? How canst thou, then, be just—how canst thou be God at all, if thou dost punish Christ the substitute, and then punish man himself afterwards?" Your only question is, "Did Christ die for me?" And the only answer we can give is—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners." Can you write your name down among the sinners—not among the complimentary sinners, but among those that feel it, bemoan it, lament it, seek mercy on account of it? Are you a sinner? That felt, that known, that professed, you are now invited to believe that Jesus Christ died for you, because you are a sinner; and you are bidden to cast yourself upon this great immovable rock, and find eternal security in the Lord Jesus Christ.

TRUE AND FALSE RELIGION.

A Sermon

PREACHED MARCH 22ND, 1857.

BY THE REV. G. BUTT,

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"The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." 1. Cor. iv. 20.

THERE were certain persons among the Corinthians who put themselves forward in the Church, and were bold enough to oppose St. Paul. Elated in their carnal minds, and puffed up with some attainments they had made in the acquisition of religious knowledge, they proudly imagined that they had just as much right to give their opinion, and lay down the law in Church matters, as the great Apostle of the Gentiles himself. This impertinent and unwarranted interference on their part, created much dissension in the Church at Corinth, and St. Paul found it necessary to reprove them by letter, and to warn them that, when he came to Corinth, he would reprove them still more sharply in person—"I will know," he writes, "not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power." It seems that they had not believed his promise of coming to Corinth, but cast discredit upon it, that they might the more easily compass their own self-exalting designs.

From the Apostle's manner of treating these vain and arrogant persons, we infer without difficulty his opinion of them, which was no doubt this, that they had never experienced in their hearts the renewing power of that religious knowledge, concerning which they boasted so loudly, and prated so impudently. For observe, he reminds them, "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." He declares that it was his intention to try them by this test, "I will know not the *speech* of them that are puffed up, but the *power*," even that holy influence which Christianity exercises over the hearts and lives of true believers—he would see how much of this might be manifest in them.

Tried by this test, the religion of some professing Christians, of some who entertain a very high opinion of their own spiritual attainments, and look down with pity, if not scorn, on others, will be found sadly wanting. As regards professors of godliness, our Lord says, by their fruits shall ye know them, or distinguish them; and when we call to mind what the tendency of the Gospel being duly received is, we shall perceive that those who are lowly in heart, and emptied of self, know the life and power of it, while the conceited and proud, and self-magnifying, are wholly ignorant of the power, though they

may very possibly be admirable *phraseologists* by aid of a good memory. Certainly the mere intellectual apprehension of the doctrines of the New Testament, tends like any other knowledge to make men, more especially *matterers*, value themselves on their attainments, and court the applause of the more ignorant, by a pompous display of them. But it will be altogether otherwise with those who have received them into their hearts by faith, and have had them wrought into their very souls by Divine Grace, and fervent prayer, by much affliction, trial and temptation, for these doctrines are purposely designed and admirably calculated to bring down human wisdom and mortal pride even to the very dust before God, so that he who knows God, alone knows himself properly. That pure revealing light of heaven, which dispels the darkness of sinful nature, and illuminates the chambers of the genuine Christian's heart, discovers to him such abominations there, such corruptions and evils there, that he is ashamed and confounded, and closes for ever the mouth of boasting.

He perceives what a poor ignorant being he is; how full of folly; how empty of all that is good; how worthless and sinful. The more he learns to know of God, the more he advances in grace and spiritual wisdom, the more sensible will he grow of his own defects. The Apostle asserts, that if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. Self-conceit is, indeed, always found to be the offspring of ignorance; the more we know, so much the better shall we know how much there is which as yet we do not know. They who have learned most of the things of God, know but *in part*, are very far removed from perfection in knowledge. Hence true knowledge makes the Christian humble, while ignorance perpetuates itself by pride, and a vain conceit, and pretence of knowledge. When God would instruct men, he first gives them the grace of humility. "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." (Is. xxviii. 9.) Without the grace of humility men cannot be saved—"Unless ye are converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven," says He, who holds the key of that kingdom. (Matt. xviii. 8.)

Having made these preliminary observations, I shall now proceed to consider:—

I. What St. Paul signifies by the expression, "Kingdom of God."

II. What he intends by his statement, "The Kingdom of God is not in word."

III. That it is in power.

1. And first we have to consider what the Apostle means by the expression—"Kingdom of God." The expression is used in Scripture evidently in more senses than one. It is used in an external sense to denote the Church visible of Christ. In an inward sense to denote the state of saving grace in the heart of man. It stands also for the kingdom of heavenly glory, or it may be taken for the Gospel dispensation. The Gospel is called "the Gospel of the Kingdom," because all who repent, and obey the Gospel, are brought into the Church by faith and baptism.

It may be observed, that as the Church of Christ is divided into visible and invisible, so the kingdom of God or of heaven may mean the whole multitude of those who profess and call themselves Christians, whether they are such in spirit and truth or no. Otherwise it may mean exclusively the sanctified company of those who are true disciples of Christ, such as "can say that Jesus is Lord by the Holy Ghost." (1. Cor. xii. 3.) In the wider sense it is used in a short parable by our Saviour, where he speaks of a net cast into the sea, which enclosed a multitude of fishes good and bad. In the narrower

sense too, Christ employs the same expression—"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of God or heaven." With respect to "the Kingdom of God," as used in our text, there can be no doubt but that St. Paul used the expression to signify the work of saving grace in the soul of man—the operation of the Holy Ghost in subjecting the sinner's heart to his Redeemer and Lord. Just so our Saviour used it, when the Pharisees demanded of him, when the kingdom of God should come—he answered them and said—"The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke xvii. 20.)

The Church of Christ is his spiritual kingdom—what constitutes true membership in this kingdom is the reigning power of Christ's grace *within* the soul. Unless the Throne of the Lord Christ is actually established in our hearts, we may be called indeed, but we are not really his true subjects. His true subjects yield him the submission of love, and strive "to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." The Holy Spirit is ever working as the rod of Christ's strength, to make his people willing in the day of his power, setting up the Kingdom of God in their hearts.

The Kingdom of God is a believing heart in which God rules with power, overthrowing the former empire of Satan, the god of this world, and the reign of spiritual darkness. Here sin can no longer have the dominion, not but what it retains much life and strength to disturb the happy reign of grace and peace, yet it cannot prevail to demolish the Kingdom of God's dear Son. Here corruption is kept down and subdued by the hand of our Mighty Redeemer. Here the service of duty and love is gratefully paid to the Most High God; the homage of the soul rendered to its rightful Lord; prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving are offered as acceptable sacrifices before the High Altar of heaven through the Mediator. Here all the affections are engaged to God, being drawn off from self and the world. Here is faith which overcometh the deceits and enticements of the flesh. Here the flame of holy and heavenly love burns brightly in the Temple of the living God, and hence shines forth a pure light to the glory of the Eternal Father, which manifests and proves the indwelling of the Spirit of his Son.

2. Let us now proceed to consider what St. Paul means by saying that this kingdom is *not* in word. It is certain that he does not mean that the word has nothing to do with it; but rather, that this kingdom is not in word only, but in power also; or, that the word is not sufficient without the influence of the Spirit. It is not unusual to find this form of expression in the Bible, where the word "only" seems omitted; as, for instance, St. John writes, "Little children, let us not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Here the word "only" is evidently to be supplied after "tongue." So here, it is not in word only, or it is not in word so much as in power. No disparagement is intended to the Word of God, which is the incorruptible seed of life eternal, being the means of quickening the soul, through the Spirit, when received by faith. Of His own will, St. James declares, He, *i.e.* God the Father of lights, begat us, *i.e.* the Children of God, with the Word of truth.

Great things are stated in Scripture concerning the efficacy of the Word. Yet, the word is only the means of dispensing light and life to the soul; it can do nothing of itself; the spirit must give it force and energy; therefore it is called the Sword of the Spirit; and, as such, it is, indeed, "quick and powerful," "dividing asunder," and "a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Of some persons it is written, "the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it"—Heb. iv. 2. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, that the Spirit open the ear and heart

for the reception of the Word, and give it quickening energy to the enlightening of the mind, to the converting of the soul, to the setting of the affections on things above, and to the sanctifying and subduing the corrupt and stubborn will—yea, that he take of the things of Jesus, and show them unto us.

It may be observed, that where the Kingdom of God hath come in word alone, there may be some spiritual light. Light is a gift of the Spirit; not necessarily a grace, or a fruit of the indwelling Spirit. Wicked men have been enlightened, and have tasted the good Word of God, and been counted true servants of Christ, and yet have fallen away into apostacy. St. Paul seems to intimate as much in Hebrews. Balaam was an instance of this, who boasted so proudly that his eyes were opened, who could so clearly and eloquently describe the blessed prospects of God's chosen people, and the coming glories of Christ's Kingdom, and the eventual confusion of all his enemies. He had spiritual knowledge or light; but his heart was not changed, but still devoted to sin and the world. Though he could plainly see how desirable the end of the righteous is, nevertheless he perished with the wicked. Therefore, let us not deceive ourselves with any gift of spiritual knowledge we may have, or fancy we have; but consider whether we really *love* the truth, have experience of its power so far as to become new creatures through the Spirit, and are confessing in our lives its influence upon our inner man.

St. Paul, in Thessalonians, declares that we must receive the love of the truth to be saved; otherwise we provoke God to send us a strong delusion to believe a lie. Now, it is one thing to *know* the truth, and quite another thing to *love* it. Knowledge, saith the Apostle, puffeth up; but charity or love edifieth or buildeth up. Thus it is with some; they are puffed up with a notion of their high attainments in religious knowledge, but they are not builded up in the faith. Were they *builded* up they would not be *puffed* up with vain glory and pride, because they would have made considerable attainments in self-knowledge or humility—since that invariably grows with the growth, and strengthens with the strength of grace and true knowledge of Christ in the soul. Who dare measure his own with St. Paul's attainments; yet he not only asserted with his lips, "I am nothing," but showed by his lowly carriage that he felt it in his heart, "serving the Lord with all humility of mind. (Acts xx. 19.)

Again—They who have mere knowledge of the truth are wanting in obedience; they forget our Lord's words, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Godliness, my friends, is a *practical* religion. If we know the truth, love it, and feel the power of it, we shall certainly obey it. Men are too apt to pride themselves upon "clear views," as they are styled, of the things of God, and to rest satisfied with a barren and uninfluential orthodoxy. They can perceive plainly enough the gross corruptions of the faith as once delivered to the saints which the Church of Rome hath made; they may be, and with good reason, shocked at the blasphemy of the Socinian, who robs the Lord Christ of his eternal and divine glory; they may be strongly opposed to other false doctrines which are held and taught by ignorant persons; and yet, all the while be woefully blind to their own state, which, in the sight of God, may be as bad or worse than theirs whom they condemn, bad as theirs undoubtedly is. They may not be living in accordance with their light, but holding, or as it may be otherwise expressed, withholding the truth in unrighteousness—not allowing it to exert its renewing influence upon their hearts and lives—that influence which it ought to have, and was purposely designed to have. Therefore, I say, their state may be so much the more evil in God's sight; because, where much is given, there much is

required, and because their error is one of which it is very difficult to convince them. Such are warned that the servant who knows his Lord's will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.

The errors of some ignorant persons, who are led astray by blind guides and have been nurtured in the cradle of superstition, demand our pity as much as our censure; and hope remains, that when the true light shines upon them, they may renounce their errors, and heartily embrace the truth which is according to godliness. Saul was a poor, blind Pharisee, but conscientiously such; what he did perversely he did ignorantly; but when the true light shone into his soul, and Christ was revealed to him, then his inquiry was, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and the remainder of his life testified his sincerity, and the power of divine grace in his heart.

On the other hand, there are no characters which afford more inquietude to the faithful ministers of Christ (who "watch for souls as they who must give account") than those professors who live on in wretched self-delusion, evidently "minding earthly things," unhumbled and unsanctified, while they know, and confess the truth with their lips. Them the Word of God has not brought down low in the dust before the High and Holy One; but they are lifted up with proud imaginations of their spiritual attainments; they regard others in the spirit of "Stand by, I am holier than thou;" they will not receive the word of warning and reproof from their minister with meekness, because they consider themselves wiser than their teachers. Much that is called evangelical religion is not exempt from this reproach. And such will ever be the case when men satisfy themselves with the word and knowledge, without the power of godliness. Then the Word, which should have been unto life, tendeth only unto death; for says Christ, in reference to the judgment of the great day, "Many shall say unto me, Lord, Lord, to whom I shall profess, I never knew you, depart from me ye workers of iniquity." And here is the test of a true, saving faith and devotion to Christ; can we give up all for Christ, do whatsoever he commandeth us, relinquish every forbidden thing, and take up our cross and follow him, overcoming the world? O, that Christian who is walking towards heaven with his Saviour's cross in his heart is a widely different character from the man who is thinking to get there without self-mortification. The cross-bearing Christian may be as much despised by the world as his crucified Master; the wordy professor may now be reaping a splendid harvest of human applause; but there is an eye upon them which seeth not as man seeth—an eye to which all hearts are open, and all desires known, and from which no secrets are hid. Blessed are they "whose praise is not of men, but of God."

The Gospel is not to be regarded as sweet alone; it has its bitterness also. It must come home to the heart with a sin-condemning and sin-mortifying power, or it will not prove *saving*. Like that little book which the angel in Revelation gave St. John, and directed him to eat up, and it was in his mouth sweet as honey, but as soon as he had eaten it his belly was bitter (Rev. x. 10), just so is it with the Word of God; *objectively*, the doctrines of grace are very pleasant to the hearer, but *subjectively*, there is much that proves bitter to carnal sense in their requirements; there is a cross to be put to the sensuality, and the pride, and the wisdom of the flesh; there must be a bowing down of the stubborn will to the will of God, and fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, and mortification of the earthly members. Therefore our Lord warns his disciples, in the parable of the sower, that some shall receive the Word at first with gladness, who afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth on account of it, shall be offended and fall away.

Persecution would winnow such chaff from among the wheat in earlier days of Christianity, but where such sifting process is not going on, we may

expect many stony-ground hearers to remain as professors, who would, in more trying days, have openly renounced the faith of Christ.

Accordingly we see those whose hearts have never been softened by grace to receive the Word aright, maintaining a high profession, while they know little or nothing of the power of godliness in sanctifying the soul, purifying the heart, and estranging it from the pomps and vanity of this evil world, and humbling it at the foot of the cross. Hence we see so many proud servants of a crucified Master, so many pretended followers of Him who was despised and rejected of men, walking as men-pleasers, courting the applause of their fellow-sinners, revelling in the intoxicating flatteries of a world which blasphemed him, standing upon the summit of the Cross as it were, as upon a conspicuous pedestal, to receive that fulsome adulation which nothing but wretched ignorance of God could make them desire or accept without shame and loathing.—(See Note.)

St. Paul, to whom the Kingdom of God had come, not in word only, but in power also, says—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of my Saviour, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

3. Let us consider the effect which the Kingdom of God has upon those to whom it comes not in Word only, but in power also, by which we may try our own spiritual estate, and know whether we have real experience of the vital energy of the Gospel or not. And here let us proceed cautiously, not laying down rules for our guidance such as carnal reason may suggest, or incline to, but such as the Word of Christ, by which and by no other standard, we shall be judged, and even now are judged.

If our state will bear the test of Christ's Word, even now are we founded upon a Rock, and shall weather every storm, but if it will not bear this test now, we are as yet built on a foundation of sand.

What then is the effect produced upon those to whom the Kingdom of God hath come in power? The Kingdom of God, says the Apostle elsewhere, is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Such is the power of the kingdom upon the soul of the true Christian believer.

There is no power but of God; we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves, none to change our own hearts, or to rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. But when through grace faith cometh by the Word of God, the Christian receives the promised spirit, and is sealed unto the day of redemption.—It is the office of the Holy Ghost to set up the throne of the Lord Christ in the hearts of his people, so that he who has received Jesus as his Prophet to teach him, and as his Priest to atone for him, acknowledges Christ as his King to reign over him. The Word of truth, though exactly fitted to be the means of accomplishing this saving work, has yet no power in itself to achieve it no more than an axe has power in itself to fell a tree, or an hammer to break in pieces a hard stone. These may be suitable instruments and requisite, but the power is in the arm that wields them effectually. Without the Spirit, we may have religious opinions and notions, yet a really uninfluenced heart; we may possess the form of godliness, but cannot have the renewing power. But the Spirit acts in exact agreement with the Word, the revealed will and truth of God, did he not act in full accordance with the Word, there would be variance in the operations of the Three persons in the Godhead, who working together as Authors of our Salvation are all one in design, and act in concert for one end.

When, therefore, we find a wondrous efficacy ascribed to the written Word, we must always remember that it possesses this only as being in the hand of the Spirit, used as a means. The Word can do nothing of itself, it is but a dead letter until the Spirit breathes life into it, and makes it become light and life to the believer. He it is who opens the sinner's eye: By nature we

are blind. The Sun affords no light to the naturally blind, no more does the light of the Word dispel the spiritual darkness of those whose moral faculties are deadened by sin. How necessary, therefore, is it, that we should earnestly and constantly pray for this good Spirit to teach us, and convince us of sin and take of the things of Jesus, and shew them unto us, write all God's laws upon our hearts, and comfort us with that blessed hope and everlasting consolation through grace, which the Gospel of our Salvation affords, and how precious, how worthy of all acceptance is the promise, that God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. He will give his Spirit to all that seek him in faith, since for this end Christ died, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Gal. iii. 14)

Every true believer in Christ has remission of sins, and the indwelling of the Spirit. These are covenant mercies conveyed to all who receive baptism rightly. This Spirit of life and sanctification is given to Christ's believing and penitent disciples to abide in them, and such having this *unction* from the Holy One know all things that are essential to their peace and salvation, know the saving doctrines of the Word after a spiritual manner, are taught them of God.

This is the promise to the Church in Isaiah—"All thy children shall be taught of God," and the effect of this divine teaching will appear in the fruits of grace—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance—and in that pure and undefiled religion which St. James declares to consist in love and holiness; "to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Of such a character is that righteousness of which the Kingdom of God is composed, concerning which our Lord states—"except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

To the life of such spiritual righteousness the Holy Ghost raises the Christian believer from the death of sin, by his Almighty quickening energy. St Paul speaks, and speaks from his own experience, "of the exceeding greatness of God's power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." (Ephes. i. 19.)

It is the very power of Christ's resurrection we are treating of, and here let me ask, have you, my friends, had experience of it. If you have, you are, you must needs be, bringing forth the fruits of true holiness to the glory of God through his Son. If you have not yet experienced this power, you are Christians in word alone; you are not one with Christ, nor Christ one with you; you have not his life in you; your religious and charitable actions are merely fruit brought forth unto yourselves, done from false and selfish motives, and with mean and selfish aims; and your talk about the things of God, is but as the noise of a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. If you have risen through the Spirit to this life of righteousness, you are rendering to God the obedience of love in all humility; you are no longer conformed to this world, but like Christ, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." You have risen with Christ, and your affections are set on things above, not on things upon earth; you have renounced the honour that cometh from man, and are seeking the honour which cometh from God only. For you there is, through the selfsame Spirit which raised you to a new, divine, and holy life, spiritual joy and peace, those two other qualities of the kingdom which St. Paul associates with righteousness.

The peace of such subjects of Christ's kingdom is a *true* peace, given them by Christ, as the purchase of his blood and righteousness; the result of that

reconciliation between God and man he effected as Mediator. By faith the Christian lays hold of it, and in his obedience ensures the blessing. And not only is peace, but joy in God, joy in the Holy Ghost, the privilege of the faithful, and humble, and obedient disciple, who in the midst of all his trials, though his heart is often in heaviness through manifold temptations, yet when faith is lively and strong, can rejoice in the Lord, yea, he *will* rejoice, triumphing over all that oppresses him through the power of Christ's grace. Such is the excellency of this power of God in the earthen vessels of his people that they can testify, that though troubled on every side, they are not distressed; though perplexed, they are not in despair; though cast down, they are not destroyed. Such is the virtue of this power, that they who are endued with it persevere and hold on their way even unto the end; their lamps of spiritual life and heavenly love, like those of the wise virgins, being constantly supplied with the oil of Divine grace, never go out, but shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," they know whose they are, because they know whom they are serving—not divers lusts and pleasures, not the god of this world, nor the vanities of this world.

They have put off the old man with his corrupt deeds and deceitful lusts; and have put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. Therefore, their peace with God passeth all understanding, and they have a spiritual joy within which delights their souls, and relieves the toils and weariness of their heavenward journey through a wilderness of sin and sorrow. This joy arises from the knowledge they have of God in Christ; the mercy, the love, the fidelity, the long-suffering, and experienced excellence of his covenant goodness towards them, in accordance with the promises of his Word; accompanied with a firm trust and ever-growing conviction, not taken up at hazard, but founded on the Holy Spirit's work and witness in their souls, that they are of the number of those whom God hath chosen in Christ for salvation; and this sweet assurance, so far from occasioning them to relax their efforts for the great reward, causes them to redouble their exertions, and to strive to abound in every Christian grace and virtue, and to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure.

Lastly, let me request you to turn to the 1st chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Thessalonians, and notice what manner of commendation St. Paul gave to the Christians in Thessalonica; and may God grant us all grace to aspire after such a character.

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

NOTE.—"We conclude with Professor Blunt's emphatic protest against the fustian which often passes for eloquence, the fruit of a miserable wish to shine, miserable in any man, most miserable in a minister of Christ, in the exercise of his office. With persons like these, as Baxter forcibly puts it, pride goes with them into their study, chooses their subject, and more often still, their language and ornaments. When pride has made the sermon, it ascends with them into the pulpit, and regulates their delivery. The sermon ended, pride goes home with them, and makes them more eager to know whether they were admired, than whether they have turned sinners from the error of their ways. The preachers of this degraded class are happily few in our Church, and are chiefly located in great towns, where alone the imposture can meet with the reward it seeks. To shame those who can thus turn godliness into a trade, and to open the eyes of their dupes, would be almost equally hopeless, but let the young minister, who is ambitious in his sermons, rather from error in judgment than corruption of mind, remember in whose name and for what purpose he speaks, and he will rejoice infinitely more when he sees reason to believe that he has made one convert, than when he has made a church full of admirers."—*Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1857.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

HUMAN INABILITY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 7TH, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him."—John vi. 44.

"COMING to Christ" is a very common phrase in Holy Scripture. It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness, and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive his righteousness to be our covering, and his blood to be our atonement. Coming to Christ, then, embraces in it repentance, self-negation, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of these great states of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnestness of prayer to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of God's gospel, and all those things which accompany the dawn of salvation in the soul. Coming to Christ is just the one essential thing for a sinner's salvation. He that cometh not to Christ, do what he may, or think what he may, is yet in "the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration. No sooner is the soul quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to him and reposes in him. Where there is not this coming to Christ, it is certain that there is as yet no quickening: where there is no quickening, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, and being dead it cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. We have before us now an announcement very startling, some say very obnoxious. Coming to Christ, though described by some people as being the very easiest thing in all the world, is in our text declared to be a thing utterly and entirely impossible to any man, unless the Father shall draw him to Christ. It shall be our business, then, to enlarge upon this declaration. We doubt not that it will always be offensive to carnal nature, but, nevertheless, the offending of human nature is sometimes the first step towards bringing it to bow itself before God. And if this be the effect of a painful process, we can forget the pain and rejoice in the glorious consequences.

I shall endeavour this morning, first of all, to notice *man's inability*, wherein it consists. Secondly, *the Father's drawings*—what these are, and how they are exerted upon the soul. And then I shall conclude by noticing a *sweet consolation* which may be derived from this seemingly barren and terrible text.

I. First, then, **MAN'S INABILITY.** The text says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any *physical* defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense. I remember to have heard a very foolish Antinomian declare, that he did not believe any man had the power to walk to the house of God unless the Father drew him. Now the man was plainly foolish, because he must have seen that as long as a man was alive and had legs, it was as easy for him to walk to the house of God as to the house of Satan. If coming to Christ includes the utterance of a prayer, man has no physical defect in that respect, if he be not dumb, he can say a prayer as easily as he can utter blasphemy. It is as easy for a man to sing one of the songs of Zion as to sing a profane and libidinous

song. There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ. All that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has, and any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God. Nor, again, does this inability lie in any *mental* lack. I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I cannot believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person. There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind: it is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep in *his nature*. Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Now, in trying to exhibit how the nature of man thus renders him unable to come to Christ, you must allow me just to take this figure. You see a sheep; how willingly it feeds upon the herbage! You never knew a sheep sigh after carrion; it could not live on lion's food. Now bring me a wolf; and you ask me whether a wolf cannot eat grass, whether it cannot be just as docile and as domesticated as the sheep. I answer, no; because its nature is contrary thereunto. You say, "Well, it has ears and legs; can it not hear the shepherd's voice, and follow him whithersoever he leadeth it?" I answer, certainly; there is no physical cause why it cannot do so, but its nature forbids, and therefore I say it *cannot* do so. Can it not be tamed? cannot its ferocity be removed? Probably it may so far be subdued that it may become apparently tame; but there will always be a marked distinction between it and the sheep, because there is a distinction in nature. Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because he cannot come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned, but because his nature is so corrupt that he has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit. But let me give you a better illustration. You see a mother with her babe in her arms. You put a knife into her hand, and tell her to stab that babe to the heart. She replies, and very truthfully, "I cannot." Now, so far as her bodily power is concerned, she can, if she pleases; there is the knife, and there is the child. The child cannot resist, and she has quite sufficient strength in her hand immediately to stab it to its heart. But she is quite correct when she says she cannot do it. As a mere act of the mind, it is quite possible she might think of such a thing as killing the child, and yet she says she cannot think of such a thing; and she does not say falsely, for her nature as a mother forbids her doing a thing from which her soul revolts. Simply because she is that child's parent she feels she cannot kill it. It is even so with a sinner. Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned, (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation) men could come if they would: it is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them. Let us enter a little more deeply into the subject, and try to show you wherein this inability of man consists, in its more minute particulars.

1. First, it lies in the *obstinacy of the human will*. "Oh!" saith the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just the *if they will* that is the difficulty. We assert that no man *will* come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, we do not assert it, but Christ himself declares it—'*Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life*,' and as long as that '*ye will not come*' stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will." It is strange how people, when talking about free-will, talk of things which they do not at all under-

stand. "Now," says one, "I believe men can be saved if they will." My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will will ever be constrained towards Christ. You reply, that men sometimes are willing, without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer—Did you ever meet with any person who was? Scores and hundreds, nay, thousands of Christians have I conversed with, of different opinions, young and old, but it has never been my lot to meet with one who could affirm that he came to Christ of himself, without being drawn. The universal confession of all true believers is this—"I know that unless Jesus Christ had sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, I would to this very hour have been wandering far from him, at a distance from him, and loving that distance well." With common consent, all believers affirm the truth, that men will not come to Christ till the Father who hath sent Christ doth draw them.

2. Again, not only is the will obstinate, but the *understanding is darkened*. Of that we have abundant Scriptural proof. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures, and known in the conscience of every Christian man—that the understanding of man is so dark, that he cannot by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The cross of Christ, so laden with glories, and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and cannot see its beauties. Talk to him of the wonders of the creation, show to him the many-coloured arch that spans the sky, let him behold the glories of a landscape, he is well able to see all these things; but talk to him of the wonders of the covenant of grace, speak to him of the security of the believer in Christ, tell him of the beauties of the person of the Redeemer, he is quite deaf to all your description; you are as one that playeth a goodly tune, it is true; but he regards not, he is deaf, he has no comprehension. Or, to return to the verse which we so specially marked in our reading, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned;" and inasmuch as he is a natural man, it is not in his power to discern the things of God. "Well," says one, "I think I have arrived at a very tolerable judgment in matters of theology; I think I understand almost every point." True, that you may do in the letter of it; but in the spirit of it, in the true reception thereof into the soul, and in the actual understanding of it, it is impossible for you to have attained, unless you have been drawn by the Spirit. For as long as that Scripture stands true, that carnal men cannot receive spiritual things, it must be true that you have not received them, unless you have been renewed and made a spiritual man in Christ Jesus. The will, then, and the understanding, are two great doors, both blocked up against our coming to Christ, and until these are opened by the sweet influences of the Divine Spirit, they must be for ever closed to anything like coming to Christ.

3. Again, *the affections*, which constitute a very great part of man, are depraved. Man, as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If ye want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere—there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath Day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is it that Christ Jesus is so little beloved? Why are even his professed followers so cold in their affections to him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God. And again, we repeat it, until these affections be renewed, and turned into a fresh channel by the gracious drawings of the Father, it is not possible for any man to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Yet once more—*conscience*, too, has been overpowered by the fall. I believe there is no more egregious mistake made by divines, than when they tell people that conscience is the viceroy of God within the soul, and that it is one of those powers which retains its ancient dignity, and stands erect amidst the fall of its compeers. My brethren, when man fell in the garden, manhood fell entirely; there was not one single pillar in the temple of manhood that stood erect. It is true, conscience was not destroyed. The pillar was not shattered; it fell, and it fell in one piece, and there it lies along, the mightiest remnant of God's once perfect work in man. But that conscience is fallen, I am sure. Look at men, Who among them is the possessor of a "good conscience toward God," but the regenerated man? Do you imagine that if men's consciences always spoke loudly and clearly to them, they would live in the daily commission of acts, which are as opposed to the right as darkness to light? No, beloved; conscience can tell me that I am a sinner, but conscience cannot make me *feel* that I am one. Conscience may tell me that such-and-such a thing is wrong, but how wrong it is conscience itself does not know. Did any man's conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins deserved damnation? Or if conscience did do that, did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? In fact, did conscience ever bring a man to such a self-renunciation, that he did totally abhor himself and all his works and come to Christ? No, conscience, although it is not dead, is ruined, its power is impaired, it hath not that clearness of eye and that strength of hand, and that thunder of voice, which it had before the fall; but hath ceased to a great degree, to exert its supremacy in the town of Mansoul. Then, beloved, it becomes necessary for this very reason, because conscience is depraved, that the Holy Spirit should step in, to show us our need of a Saviour, and draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Still," says one, "as far as you have hitherto gone, it appears to me that you consider that the reason why men do not come to Christ is that they will not, rather than they cannot." True, most true. I believe the greatest reason of man's inability is the obstinacy of his will. That once overcome, I think the great stone is rolled away from the sepulchre, and the hardest part of the battle is already won. But allow me to go a little further. My text does not say, "No man will come," but it says, "No man can come." Now, many interpreters believe that the *can* here, is but a strong expression conveying no more meaning than the word *will*. I feel assured that this is not correct. There is in man, not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ; and this I will prove to every Christian at any rate. Beloved, I speak to you who have already been quickened by the divine grace, does not your experience teach you that there are times when you have a will to serve God, and yet have not the power? Have you not sometimes been obliged to say that you have wished to believe, but you have had to pray, "Lord, help mine unbelief?" Because, although willing enough to receive God's testimony, your own carnal nature was too strong for you, and you felt you needed supernatural help. Are you able to go into your room at any hour you choose, and to fall upon your knees and say, "Now, it is my will that I should be very earnest in prayer, and that I should draw near unto God?" I ask, do you find your power equal to your will? You could say, even at the bar of God himself, that you are sure you are not mistaken in your willingness; you are willing to be wrapt up in devotion, it is your will that your soul should not wander from a pure contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you find that you cannot do that, even when you are willing, without the help of the Spirit. Now, if the quickened child of God finds a spiritual inability, how much more the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sin? If even the advanced Christian, after thirty or forty years, finds himself sometimes willing and yet powerless—if such be his experience,—does it not seem more than likely that the poor sinner who has not yet believed, should find a need of strength as well as a want of will?

But, again, there is another argument. If the sinner has strength to come to Christ, I should like to know how we are to understand those continual descriptions of the sinner's state which we meet with in God's holy Word? Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling. Or again, do not all men see that there is a distinction between *will* and *power*: might not that corpse be sufficiently quickened to get a will, and yet be so powerless that it could not lift as much as its hand or foot? Have we never seen cases

in which persons have been just sufficiently re-animated to give evidence of life, and have yet been so near death that they could not have performed the slightest action? Is there not a clear difference between the giving of the will and the giving of power? It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. Make a man willing, and he shall be made powerful; for when God gives the will, he does not tantalize man by giving him to wish for that which he is unable to do; nevertheless he makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.

Then I must ask one more question: if all that were needed to make a man willing, do you not at once degrade the Holy Spirit? Are we not in the habit of giving all the glory of salvation wrought in us to God the Spirit? But now, if all that God the Spirit does for me is to make me willing to do these things for myself, am I not in a great measure a sharer with the Holy Spirit in the glory? and may I not boldly stand up and say, "It is true the Spirit gave me the will to do it, but still I did it myself, and therein will I glory; for if I did these things myself without assistance from on high, I will not cast my crown at his feet; it is my own crown, I earned it, and I will keep it." Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is evermore in Scripture set forth as the person who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, we hold it to be a legitimate inference that he must do something more for us than the mere making of us willing, and that therefore there must be another thing besides want of will in a sinner—there must be absolute and actual want of power.

Now, before I leave this statement, let me address myself to you for a moment. I am often charged with preaching doctrines that may do a great deal of hurt. Well, I shall not deny the charge, for I am not careful to answer in this matter. I have my witnesses here present to prove that the things which I have preached have done a great deal of hurt, but they have not done hurt either to morality or to God's Church; the hurt has been on the side of Satan. There are not ones or twos but many hundreds who this morning rejoice that they have been brought near to God; from having been profane Sabbath-breakers, drunkards, or worldly persons, they have been brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; and if this be any hurt may God of his infinite mercy send us a thousand times as much. But further, what truth is there in the world which will not hurt a man who chooses to make hurt of it? You who preach general redemption, are very fond of proclaiming the great truth of God's mercy to the last moment. But how dare you preach that? Many people make hurt of it by putting off the day of grace, and thinking that the last hour may do as well as the first. Why, if we never preached anything which man could misuse, and abuse, we must hold our tongues for ever. Still says one, "Well then, if I cannot save myself, and cannot come to Christ, I must sit still and do nothing." If men do say so, on their own heads shall be their doom. We have very plainly told you that there are many things you can do. To be found continually in the house of God is in your power; to study the Word of God with diligence is in your power; to renounce your outward sin, to forsake the vices in which you indulge, to make your life honest, sober, and righteous, is in your power. For this you need no help from the Holy Spirit; all this you can do yourself; but to come to Christ truly is not in your power, until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost. But mark you, your want of power is no excuse, seeing that you have no desire to come, and are living in wilful rebellion against God. Your want of power lies mainly in the obstinacy of nature. Suppose a liar says that it is not in his power to speak the truth, that he has been a liar so long, that he cannot leave it off; is that an excuse for him? Suppose a man who has long indulged in lust should tell you that he finds his lusts have so gripped about him like a great iron net that he cannot get rid of them, would you take that as an excuse? Truly it is none at all. If a drunkard has become so foully a drunkard, that he finds it impossible to pass a public-house without stepping in, do you therefore excuse him? No, because his inability to reform lies in his nature, which he has no desire to restrain or conquer. The thing that is done, and the thing that causes the thing that is done, being both from the root of sin, are two evils which cannot excuse each other. What though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots? It is because you have learned to do evil that you cannot now learn to do well; and instead, therefore, of letting you sit down to excuse yourselves, let me put a thunderbolt beneath the seat of your sloth, that you may be startled by it and aroused. Remember, that to sit still is to be damned to all

eternity. Oh! that God the Holy Spirit might make use of this truth in a very different manner! Before I have done I trust I shall be enabled to show you how it is that this truth, which apparently condemns men and shuts them out, is, after all, the great truth, which has been blessed to the conversion of men.

II. Our second point is THE FATHER'S DRAWINGS. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." How then does the Father draw men? Arminian divines generally say that God draws men by the preaching of the gospel. Very true; the preaching of the gospel is the instrument of drawing men, but there must be some thing more than this. Let me ask to whom did Christ address these words? Why, to the people of Capernaum, where he had often preached, where he had uttered mournfully and plaintively the woes of the law and the invitations of the gospel. In that city he had done many mighty works and worked many miracles. In fact, such teaching and such miraculous attestation had he given to them, that he declared that Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes, if they had been blessed with such privileges. Now, if the preaching of Christ himself did not avail to the enabling these men to come to Christ, it cannot be possible that all that was intended by the drawing of the Father was simply preaching. No, brethren, you must note again, he does not say no man can come except the *minister* draw him, but except the *Father* draw him. Now there is such a thing as being drawn by the gospel, and drawn by the minister, without being drawn by God. Clearly, it is a divine drawing that is meant, a drawing by the Most High God—the First Person of the most glorious Trinity sending out the Third Person, the Holy Spirit, to induce men to come to Christ. Another person turns round and says with a sneer, "Then do you think that Christ drags men to himself, seeing that they are unwilling!" I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, "Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their heads and drags them to himself." I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However, he could not. But said I, while Christ does not drag people to himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that he draws them by the heart quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father's drawing there is no compulsion whatever; Christ never compelled any man to come to him against his will. If a man be unwilling to be saved, Christ does not save him against his will. How, then, does the Holy Spirit draw him? Why, by making him willing. It is true he does not use "moral suasion;" he knows a nearer method of reaching the heart. He goes to the secret fountain of the heart, and he knows how, by some mysterious operation, to turn the will in an opposite direction, so that, as Ralph Erskine paradoxically puts it, the man is saved "with full consent against his will;" that is, against his old will he is saved. But he is saved with full consent, for he is made willing in the day of God's power. Do not imagine that any man will go to heaven kicking and struggling all the way against the hand that draws him. Do not conceive that any man will be plunged in the bath of a Saviour's blood while he is striving to run away from the Saviour. Oh, no. It is quite true that first of all man is unwilling to be saved. When the Holy Spirit hath put his influence into the heart, the text is fulfilled—"draw me and I will run after thee." We follow on while he draws us, glad to obey the voice which once we had despised. But the gist of the matter lies in the turning of the will. How that is done no flesh knoweth; it is one of those mysteries that is clearly perceived as a fact, but the cause of which no tongue can tell, and no heart can guess. The apparent way, however, in which the Holy Spirit operates, we can tell you. The first thing the Holy Spirit does when he comes into a man's heart is this: he finds him with a very good opinion of himself: and there is nothing which prevents a man coming to Christ like a good opinion of himself. Why, says man, "I don't want to come to Christ. I have as good a righteousness as anybody can desire. I feel I can walk into heaven on my own rights." The Holy Spirit lays bare his heart, lets him see the loathsome cancer that is there eating away his life, uncovers to him all the blackness and defilement of that sink of hell, the human heart, and then the man stands aghast. "I never thought I was like this. Oh! those sins I thought were little, have swelled out to an immense stature. What I thought was a mole-hill has grown into a mountain; it was but the hyssop on the wall before, but now it has become a cedar of Lebanon. Oh," saith the man within himself, "I will try and reform; I will do good deeds enough to wash these black deeds out." Then

comes the Holy Spirit and shows him that he cannot do this, takes away all his fancied power and strength, so that the man falls down on his knees in agony, and cries, "Oh! once I thought I could save myself by my good works, but now I find that

‘Could my tears for ever flow,
Could my zeal no respite know,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save and thou alone.’”

Then the heart sinks, and the man is ready to despair. And saith he, "I never can be saved. Nothing can save me." Then, comes the Holy Spirit and shows the sinner the cross of Christ, gives him eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, and says, "Look to yonder cross, that Man died to save sinners; you feel that you are a sinner; he died to save you." And he enables the heart to believe, and to come to Christ. And when it comes to Christ, by this sweet drawing of the Spirit, it finds "a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which keeps his heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord." Now, you will plainly perceive that all this may be done without any compulsion. Man is as much drawn willingly, as if he were not drawn at all; and he comes to Christ with full consent, with as full a consent as if no secret influence had ever been exercised in his heart. But that influence must be exercised, or else there never has been and there never will be, any man who either can or will come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. And, now, we gather up our ends, and conclude by trying to make a practical application of the doctrine; and we trust a comfortable one. "Well," says one, "if what this man preaches be true, what is to become of my religion? for do you know I have been a long while trying, and I do not like to hear you say a man cannot save himself. I believe he can, and I mean to persevere; but if I am to believe what you say, I must give it all up and begin again." My dear friends, it will be a very happy thing if you do. Do not think that I shall be at all alarmed if you do so. Remember, what you are doing is building your house upon the sand, and it is but an act of charity if I can shake it a little for you. Let me assure you, in God's name, if your religion has no better foundation than your own strength, it will not stand you at the bar of God. Nothing will last to eternity, but that which came from eternity. Unless the everlasting God has done a good work in your heart, all you may have done must be unravelled at the last day of account. It is all in vain for you to be a church-goer or chapel-goer, a good keeper of the Sabbath, an observer of your prayers: it is all in vain for you to be honest to your neighbours and reputable in your conversation; if you hope to be saved by these things, it is all in vain for you to trust in them. Go on; be as honest as you like, keep the Sabbath perpetually, be as holy as you can. I would not dissuade you from these things. God forbid; grow in them, but oh, do not trust in them, for if you rely upon these things you will find they will fail you when most you need them. And if there be anything else that you have found yourself able to do unassisted by divine grace, the sooner you can get rid of the hope that has been engendered by it the better for you, for it is a foul delusion to rely upon anything that flesh can do. A spiritual heaven must be inhabited by spiritual men, and preparation for it must be wrought by the Spirit of God. "Well," cries another, "I have been sitting under a ministry where I have been told that I could, at my own option, repent and believe, and the consequence is that I have been putting it off from day to day. I thought I could come one day as well as another; that I had only to say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and believe, and then I should be saved. Now you have taken all this hope away for me, sir; I feel amazement and horror taking hold upon me." Again, I say, "My dear friend, I am very glad of it. This was the effect which I hoped to produce. I pray that you may feel this a great deal more. When you have no hope of saving yourself, I shall have hope that God has begun to save you. As soon as you say, 'Oh, I cannot come to Christ. Lord, draw me, help me,' I shall rejoice over you. He who has got a will, though he has not power, has grace begun in his heart, and God will not leave him until the work is finished." But, careless sinner, learn that thy salvation now hangs in God's hand. Oh, remember thou art entirely in the hand of God. Thou hast sinned against him, and if he wills to damn thee, damned thou art. Thou canst not resist his will nor thwart his purpose. Thou hast deserved his wrath, and if he chooses to pour the full shower of that wrath upon thy head,

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thou canst do nothing to avert it. If, on the other hand, he chooses to save thee, he is able to save thee to the very uttermost. But thou liest as much in his hand as the summer's moth beneath thine own finger. He is the God whom thou art grieving every day. Doth it not make thee tremble to think that thy eternal destiny now hangs upon the will of him whom thou hast angered and incensed? Dost not this make thy knees knock together, and thy blood curdle? If it does so I rejoice, inasmuch as this may be the first effect of the Spirit's drawing in thy soul. Oh, tremble to think that the God whom thou hast angered, is the God upon whom thy salvation or thy condemnation entirely depends. Tremble and "kiss the Son lest he be angry and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little."

Now, the comfortable reflection is this:—Some of you this morning are conscious that you are coming to Christ. Have you not begun to weep the penitential tear? Did not your closet witness your prayerful preparation for the hearing of the Word of God? And during the service of this morning, has not your heart said within you, "Lord, save me, or I perish, for save myself I cannot?" And could you not now stand up in your seat, and sing,

"Oh, sovereign grace my heart subdue;
I would be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive of my Lord,
To sing the triumph of his Word?"

And have I not myself heard you say in your heart—"Jesus, Jesus, my whole trust is in thee: I know that no righteousness of my own can save me, but only thou, O Christ—sink or swim, I cast myself on thee?" Oh, my brother, thou art drawn by the Father, for thou couldst not have come unless he had drawn thee. Sweet thought! And if he has drawn thee, dost thou know what is the delightful inference? Let me repeat one text, and may that comfort thee: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Yes, my poor weeping brother, inasmuch as thou art now coming to Christ, God has drawn thee; and inasmuch as he has drawn thee, it is a proof that he has loved thee from before the foundation of the world. Let thy heart leap within thee, thou art one of his. Thy name was written on the Saviour's hands when they were nailed to the accursed tree. Thy name glitters on the breast-plate of the great High Priest to-day; ay, and it was there before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round. Rejoice in the Lord ye that have come to Christ, and shout for joy all ye that have been drawn of the Father. For this is your proof, your solemn testimony, that you from among men have been chosen in eternal election, and that you shall be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed.

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THE IMMUTABLE LOVE OF JEHOVAH.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 3RD, 1858,

BY THE REV. JEMSON DAVIS, VICAR, M.A.,

In the Parish Church of St. Nicholas, Leicester.

"I am Jehovah, I change not."—Malachi iii. 6.

THE sins and transgressions of Judah and Jerusalem, together with the Divine judgments thereby incurred, are the chief and almost the only subject-matter of this, the last of the ancient prophets. These sins are summed up under three particular heads—*first*, that they, the Jews, held in contempt and disdain the divinely instituted ordinances of worship, whereby, it is said, "they despised the name of the Lord."—Mal. i. 6. *Secondly*, those evils, which were national evils, evils in their social and civil life—evils little dreamt of as evils, yet denounced by Jehovah as amongst the sorest and greatest of all evils—evils for which the land was stigmatised as the "border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord had indignation for ever;" Mal. i. 4: for they "defrauded the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and turned aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Me, saith the Lord."—Mal. iii. 5. As elsewhere, it is said, "He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker"—reproaches him who, in his Sovereign will and good pleasure, made the poor man, poor.—Prov. xiv. 31. It is a calling in question the prerogative of Jehovah as Creator, his truth, wisdom, and goodness. When examined upon Scriptural principles, we cannot but perceive that it is a clear and unmistakable sign of wide-spread and deep-rooted infidelity, only to be exceeded by the stupidity and ignorance by which men are blinded as to its nature, as evil. And I beseech your profound attention to this plain fact—that under the Gentile dispensation, under which you and I live, the oppression of the poor is set forth as the greatest of sins; it is held up as the last grand demonstration of the enmity of the creature's mind against God, and as the reason or ground—and, be it observed, the *only* reason adduced—for the hastening on the close of the Gentile dispensation; the only reason for which the nations are arraigned at the bar of Divine judgment, and sentence of "guilty" is pronounced and executed upon them. Matt. xxv. 41—46. "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these my brethren, ye did not to Me." It is a sentence positively of the want of love to their fellow-men; yet is it not, negatively, for their oppression of their fellow-men?

Thirdly—Their fondness for and addictedness to the idolatrous practices and manners of the nations around them, which they had then adopted and in-

corporated with their own Divinely instituted ordinances of worship; practices and forms, which, although they might powerfully affect the feelings and excite the passions—yet were nothing else than sensualising practices. Man, by nature and constitution, is a sensualist. Jude tells us this, v. 19. James tells us this, ch. iii. 15. But he shows it in its most odious form, in religious matters and worship, substituting things visible and sensible for the things invisible and spiritual.

Malachi is the last of the prophets. Jehovah's voice is no more heard in the language of prophecy—"Giving line upon line, and precept upon precept, "speaking by parcels or piece-meal, and in manifold ways." Heb. i. 1. The voice of prophecy passes away; a dead silence ensues; for four hundred and fifty years not a faint whisper or echo, even, is heard. From these facts and circumstances, we must conclude that these national sins were damning sins, and wherever they prevail, they still are damning sins; there can be none greater. By these the Jews set the seal to their national apostacy, they hurried on God's sore judgments and plagues, who gave them up to follow their own devices:—"Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone;" and left them to fill up the measure of their iniquities, not only by the blasphemy and denial of the Lord Jesus, as the Christ of God; but more especially by their blasphemy and denial of the Holy Ghost, which they consummated in their rejection of the preaching of the Gospel by the Apostles for the space of forty years; their denial of the fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thereby, also, their rejection of eternal life, as the free and unconditional gift of God the Father. And this is the great sin of our own day! But still, in the midst of these sore and heavy judgments—there are, in this closing prophecy—this farewell Word of the Lord, some very sweet—some most touching words and gracious promises, in which, doubtless, the saints of God of those and subsequent years, the Simeons and Annas, the Zechariahs and Elizabeths, must have found, in the midst of the darkness and infidelity that enveloped them, "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." Amongst these promises, that of our text is very conspicuous; proclaiming amidst all sin, rebellions, backslidings, and transgressions,—whether collective, as of nations, or individually, as of persons—the immutability of Jehovah.

You and I, beloved, have much need of inward prayer, both for ourselves and for each other—that the good Lord would at this moment be pleased, in pity to our ignorance and infirmities, to vouchsafe to me great enlargement and spirituality of mind; and to you—the hearing ear, the seeing eye, and the opened understanding that the spiritual things he may graciously give to me to utter may be fitted for you, as spiritual persons, to receive. Take these words first—

I. "I am Jehovah, I." Now, just let me point out, before I proceed further, that the word "*am*" is in Italics; it has been introduced by the translators. It was thought, I suppose, that its introduction would make the passage more intelligible; but I believe that, if you will leave out the verb "*am*" for a moment—you will perceive a still greater beauty and force in the passage. "For, I, Jehovah, I;" what a fulness and emphasis! what great simplicity, and yet what a marvellous grandeur and majesty breaks forth from it! My soul is filled with holy fear and reverence whilst reading this great and glorious name, in which my God is pleased

to reveal himself. I am bowed down in the deepest humiliation and self-abasement whilst I contemplate in this name the glorious Majesty of the self-existent Godhead—the glorious Majesty of the Lord our God, but in his Trinity of Persons, together with the infinite and incomprehensible perfections of the Godhead! For it will be very plain, and readily admitted, that we are not at liberty to construe this great, this wonderful name, except in strict consistency with the whole Scriptural record. We may not take it as the name of any one of the Persons in the Godhead to the exclusion of the rest; but of Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—Jehovah as subsisting and acting according to his eternally predestinative Will, and according to these eternal covenant engagements, and in those distinct and supererogation Relationships in which they, the Persons in the Godhead, are revealed as standing, and as having ever stood, from all eternity and before all worlds—first with respect to each other, and then with respect to those who, through God's free, sovereign grace, have been constituted the covenant and elect seed. God the Father, one with his Christ, in the essential nature of the Godhead, willing, decreeing, fixing, and settling all things for the manifestation of his own Glory in Christ Jesus, and the salvation of his Elect, in the sight of all creatures and world without end; the Lord Jesus, one in the essence of the Godhead—also one with the creature by virtue of the assumed human nature, for he is our Immanuel—executing, fulfilling, and accomplishing all things for the glory of the Father, by his loving and all-sufficient obedience to the Divine and perfect law of God; which obedience no mere creature, either of men or angels, could ever render—which no mere creature was ever required to yield—which none but a Divine Person could ever yield—for a Divine nature only could be all-sufficient for perfect obedience to a Divine Law; and, at last, setting to his seal by freely and voluntarily yielding up his pure, spotless, and sinless nature unto death—unto all kinds of death—becoming obedient even unto the death of the cross; God the Father testifying, by resurrection, to the perfection of his obedience, as well as to the truth and reality of his Divine person and nature, and the completion of his mediatorial work of salvation, that “he was the (Geber) Mighty One to save”—Ps. lxxxix, 19. Lastly, God the Holy Ghost, in conformity with his everlasting covenant engagement, personally indwelling and almightily inworking and bearing witness as heretofore, in the life and death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, so afterwards, in time, with respect to the elect and redeemed ones, revealing to them personally, particularly, and individually, and realizing in their hearts and consciences, “that eternal life which God the Father had given them in Christ Jesus,” overcoming all the guilt and fear arising from the convictions of sin, and of a sinful nature by the great fact revealed to them, that in the death and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus all their sins and transgressions, iniquities and corruptions had been “blotted out,” and “destroyed,” and “put an end to.” Nay more, that they themselves, by virtue of his divine righteousness had been established unalterably and everlastingly righteous before God; and that as to death, and the grave, or hell, these were no longer enemies, and to be dreaded, for that they had been swallowed up in His victory and triumph over them; and by virtue of His resurrection unto the life eternal, they, the redeemed and saved, had been established unalterably and immutably and everlastingly in Christ, a living people to God, over whom

death and condemnation has no power—*can* have no power, for they live unto God; they never die; but they live unto the age, and for the ages of ages. ‡ Thus is he Jehovah! Thus is He Jehovah in his covenant persons and engagements, as related to and engaged for us. Oh, these Divine relationships, these supercreation relationships, these most glorious and blessed engagements! This is our foundation; this is our standing place, our resting place, our strength and everlasting security! ☩ God in Christ Jesus by his Holy Spirit within us! This is the Lord our God; this is Jehovah, and blessed be his glorious name, who is everlastingly and immutably one for us, and in us and with us!

And there has been no change in the Godhead; no—nor in the everlasting covenant; no, nor in the Persons in the Godhead; no, nor in those Divine relationships, which have been sealed to us in the Death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, there *can be* no change; for if such a change were possible, you would undo the Death and Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, and make it as though it had never taken place; and if you undo his work, you undo his Person and Being, and then, “you are yet in your sins,” and under the curse and condemnation; and death has its sting, and the grave has its victory; and if so, then God the Father must cease to be God—for if he be God that is capable of change, he must be a God of infirmity, and therefore no God at all. Why then, as one has beautifully but quaintly expressed it, “You have taken away my God, you have taken away my faith, and where is the glory that is hoped for?” But no, not so! Also, I take these words as expressive of the full, resolved, the unaltered and immutable will of Jehovah, engaged to carry out, and throughout all ages to carry out and maintain his divine and everlasting purposes. Ps. xxxiii. 11, “The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to generation and generation.” “I am God and there is none like Me. My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure.” Isaiah xli. 9, 10. In the words of one of our most accomplished poets, he ever does and he ever will pursue—

“The smooth and equal course of his affairs.”

If these things be so, then there can be no room for contingency. Jehovah fore-saw, fore-ordained, and resolved to accomplish all that he had eternally decreed in himself and in the councils of the ever-blessed Trinity! What a crushing thunder-bolt this, as Luther says, to poor free will! How it gives the lie to every one who falsely and impiously advocates salvation as doubtful, uncertain, incomplete, and conditional upon anything, whether of faith, or repentance, or good works!—salvation itself being already an accomplished fact! But, oh, on the other hand, to the poor, humbled, broken-hearted, and penitent sinner, what a rich storehouse and inexhaustible fund of sweetest consolation!

II. “I, Jehovah, I change not.” Upon this point the Scriptures are full of instruction, and abound in the most striking illustrations. I do not allude to more than one or two of them. In James i. 17, we read of “The Father of Lights with whom there is no variableness, or shadow of turning.” How beautiful! The Sun in the heavens has his yearly changes and variations. He ascends from the Equator until he reaches his zenith, producing the highest degree of heat, the most intense

degree of light, the most genial influences upon the fruits of the earth; and Nature becomes arrayed in all her charms and brings forth all her sweetest perfumes;—but it stops not there. Very soon it begins to descend, and gradually declines until it reaches the equator again, and then sinks to its utmost depth—producing by its absence the intense cold of winter, the shortest duration and the smallest power of light; and yet it stops not there, but then begins to ascend again. So that winter and summer, spring and autumn are the yearly changes of the sun. It is always on the move, on the change. In like manner it has its *diurnal* variations. It rises in the morning and gradually ascends to its meridian; and then again descends until it disappears beneath the horizon, leaving nothing but darkness. And the sun as it rises, has, by reason of intervening objects—its shadows. These are lengthened in the morning; as the sun ascends they decrease; at the meridian they cease; but instantly they appear again on the reverse side; shortened, indeed, at the first—yet they become drawn out as the evening approaches, until by the sun setting they are lost again in the deep darkness of night. But not so with Jehovah, whether as to His nature and character—which is his love, or as to his Personal relationship as Father, or his finished work of salvation by Christ Jesus, or his gifts of grace in time—“With him there is no variableness or shadow of turning!” Again, St. Paul in Heb. i. is setting forth, by the way of contrasts, the super-excellency of the Lord Jesus—over angels even; and then, as to his High Priesthood and office, his pre-eminence over Moses and Aaron and every other order of priesthood—whether of human or divine ordination—testifying at the same time to his Divine nature and Personality as the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, yea, as “very God of very God:”—see verse 8, “Thy throne, oh, Elohim is for ever and ever.” Then the Apostle quotes the closing verses of Psalm cii. “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail!”—The heavens and the earth, notwithstanding their transcendent beauty and splendour, shall grow old, and fade, and die away; and, like a worthless, worn-out garment, they shall be changed. But then the Holy Ghost immediately adds, “Thou art the same—thou art He; the Hebrew word expresses the Eternity and Immortality of Jehovah;—of Jesus, therefore, as the Immutable Jehovah. Indeed, I cannot forbear pointing out to you that, whatever other great and blessed truths are contained in this Epistle, this one thing is quite clear, that as this Epistle begins with proclaiming the Eternity and Immutability of Jehovah Jesus, as it does in the Psalm quoted, so also it closes with the same—that as to the Lord Jesus Christ—His Godhead, His Personality, his Mediatorship; and finished Salvation, and destruction and triumph over sin, law, death, and hell; and in his Resurrection and Glorification, and the gift of the life eternal, immortal and incorruptible, which he received of the Father, not for Himself alone, but for all them who are one with Him, Heb. ii. 11, He is still Jesus as yesterday—so to-day and for ever and ever, immutably the same!

Now, so long as the people of God remain in this flesh and blood state, possessed indeed through grace, but as yet, in the earnest of it only the Divine Nature, and of

the principle of the divine and heavenly life in their newborn minds; it cannot fail but that they *shall*, and they *must*, by the necessity of the case, experience, such is the evil propensity of their creaturely and fallen nature, or such the overpowering and ensnaring temptations of this time-state, or such the bitter hatred, and fierce persecution of an ungodly infidel world—(And in the case of the professedly religious, the more religious natural men become, the more bitter their hatred, the more intense their fiery persecuting zeal)—It cannot be, I say, but that God's believing people must experience many changes and vicissitudes, many sore trials and hard conflicts, many downfalls and direful calamities; but in the midst of all their sins, convictions, corruptions and distresses, oh, may the Lord enable them ever to bear in mind this one great fact, and let them cherish it in their heart of hearts, "I, Jehovah Jesus, I change not." The mind of man by nature was filled with enmity and opposition to God, the opposition and antagonism of hatred against God: but the mind of God, the Divine nature was love, everlasting love—love before all worlds, and it has never changed. And though this divine grace, the divine love has been shed abroad in the heart of a believer, still that believer must confess, oh, what changes and alternations many poor frames and feelings, but God never changes towards thee. "His heart towards thee is what it was. Clouds and darkness may come between thee and him, but it is day still. Storms and tempests there may be upon thy soul, but it is day still; his love is ever in its zenith, like Joshua's sun; and is over thee, fixed, and perpetually. He may let thee feel the effects of his love less one day than another, in its comforts and quickening, but his love is substantially and solidly the same, and varies not whatever you may think!"

Do you ask—why is it thus with me?—why am I left to encounter such disastrous troubles? The answer is plain; this state of things was divinely and wisely fore-ordained—ordained to bring out a great fact, to prove to you the vanity and mutability of the mere fleshly nature, the insufficiency and worthlessness of the world, and the emptiness of everything that is creaturely—"to humble you, and cause you to know what is in your hearts;" not to cause God to know the state of your hearts, but to cause *you yourselves* to know what is in *your own* hearts, that you cannot keep his commandments; that so you may be powerfully constrained to acknowledge, and flee to, and trust in the immutability of Jehovah. Beloved, this is the end and purpose of God in our daily changes and trials; but Oh, beloved, remember also that they are God's purposes of love, when they have a humbling and self-abasing influence, and produce, as their proper effect, godly sorrow unto repentance not to be repented of; and oh, beloved, still further remember, that where they do not humble and abase to the lowest dust, as in the case of Job, they harden, as in the case of Pharaoh!

The faith of every believer is one with the faith of his Covenant Head, the Lord Jesus, for it is he who is the real speaker in the thirty-first Psalm; and he confesses with a holy confidence, "My times are in thy hands," verse 15; but, at the same time, the believer forgets not the precious principle, that, with respect to all "*these times*," (Rom. viii. 29) "All things work together for good to them that love God."

THE IMMUTABLE LOVE OF JEHOVAH.

Jehovah works and acts in all things *naturally*, *i.e.*, according to his divine nature, and not contrary to it; and his nature is love. He is self-moved in all that he does; He is unmoved and immovable by anything out of himself; He cannot be moved by anything in the creature; he is the Alpha and Omega of all things—to Himself as well as to all the works of his hands; (1 Cor. viii. 3., Rom. xi. 36.)

Also, He acts necessarily; in other words, he works, and *must* work, according to his own eternal counsels and designs, whether in Creation, Providence, or Grace (Acts xv. 18; Ps. 145; Deut. xxxii. 4). But then, the justice and judgment, holiness and righteousness—these never vary, never change, never alter—are ever one and the same—immutable. God can never deny Himself.

If then, these be facts, we may be sure and certain that no creature righteousness and purity was the cause of the divine love; for if the righteousness of the creature were the cause of divine love, it would be the cause of the divine nature; or in other words, the inferior and Created one would be the cause of the superior and uncaused God! And we may be equally certain that as the divine love, which is the divine nature, is eternal, absolute and unlimited, so neither sin, nor corruption, nor anything else in the creature, can alter or change the divine nature or love into enmity and hatred towards the creature; for that would be just as much as to say that the divine nature was *not* eternal and absolute. For the love of Jehovah was not, in the first instance, fixed upon the creature for the creature's sake alone, but had respect to God himself, and to his manifested Self-existent Essence, Being, Persons and Perfections: and had respect to creatures only, in so far as, according to his Sovereign will and good pleasure, whether elect or non-elect, they by his will in his eternal election and predestination, or in creation, or in salvation, were respectively constituted the glorifiers of Jehovah, according to their ordained state and condition. True—"The law entered, Rom. v. 20-21; temptation entered, sin entered, death entered; equally true it is, that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity" (Habak i. 13; Ps. v. 5), and hateth them *as such*. But the law entered as a means to an end; to shew that no creature can stand before God, for one moment, in any creature righteousness and purity; no, not even the brightest, and best, and noblest of men or angels; that the law was given, not to prove how good man is, but to disprove the goodness of the creature, and to make it manifest that "every man, every Adam (literally) at his best estate is altogether vanity" or mutable. And then the law having discharged its office and done its work, as a part of the divine plan, the way was opened by which the grace of God might be manifested as supreme, as paramount, as "reigning through righteousness" "unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord;" or, in other words, a way was prepared, in which the believer should stand, not as men express it, by imputation, righteous merely, but by virtue of the divine union and consequently by imputation, righteous, in the righteousness of Christ, which is the righteousness of God, which is, therefore righteousness everlasting and immutable.

Do you ask what end or purpose, then, was answered by the death and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus? Is it not rendered needless and useless? Not so—the death of Christ was not indeed, the cause of the love of God to the creature; for that would be all one as saying that Jehovah, before Christ's death, was not love—was not grace—was not the Father of mercies—was not what ages before he had

declared himself to be, "the Lord—the Lord God gracious and merciful;" but the death of Christ was to give effect to, and make full proof of, the divine love, the divine grace, the divine mercy—was not designed as a remedy for some unforeseen accident, called sin, or to repair something discovered to be faulty and defective in the creature—a flaw in the raw material, but as the act of loving and willing obedience to the will of the Father, to glorify the Father, by proving the perfection of the divine nature: and, as regarded the sinner, to give effect, I say, to the divine love, by the exhibition of it under the most trying and contradictory, and, humanly speaking, impossible case and circumstances; to give effect to it by delivering the sinner from his sins, and, by divine power, reconciling him in his heart and conscience to God, and bringing him to love God, to lie down in that blissful and heavenly bosom of the divine harmony, described by the Evangelists. (1 John, iv. 16.)—"God is love: and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." This is his heaven upon earth! In short we must say, that the death of Christ was the blessed medium, in and through which—the creature having given full effect to his own nature as vanity or mutability—God was pleased to shew forth, not only the enormity of sin—and his own just and righteous abhorrence of sin—but, at the same time, to give full effect to his divine love in its glorious greatness—its eternity, perpetuity, and immutability.

Why did he die? He died then to answer the eternal purposes, and high behests of love. He did not die to save us from the bitter consequences of our sins and sinful nature, or to enable us to evade or escape the penal effects of our sins, its curse, and condemnation. We do—and we *must*—undergo the sentence of the curse, "the judgment unto condemnation;" for we die—and "death is the wages of sin." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Nor did he suffer—the Just One—that we, the unjust, might be freed from sufferings, from the just punishment of our sins; because "sin shall not go unpunished," neither in this age, nor yet in the age to come: punishment for sin must have full sway, *must* have the utmost satisfaction. Hath God said it, and shall he not do it? But the Lord Jesus, having once died—died altogether, died into the grave—died all the deaths that he could die, and so brought wholly and altogether under the curse and condemnation. (Eccles. xii. 7; Gen. iii. 19.) He might save us by rescuing us through resurrection from the grave; that resurrection being the resurrection unto eternal life (John xi. 26). Or, in other words, that whereas (Titus i. 2) God, who cannot lie, promised eternal life before all worlds (1 John ii. 25); and all the promises of God, in Christ Jesus, as risen and glorified, were realised and proved immutably true, "yea, and Amen" to us (2. Cor. i. 20), that we might be established in them, and even now, on this side the grave, receive the enjoyment of them, in the earnest of them, in our spiritual minds, and hereafter perfectly and completely in our re-united resurrection bodies and glorified spirits. Thus Jehovah might prove both presently, as well as eventually, what he is in himself, and in his Being, and in his love—so too in his counsel—purposes and word and work—the great I Am, the Eternal God, the ever-living one—that "I, Jehovah, I change not."

May the good Lord pardon all my infirmities, and bless this word, so far as it is according to his will and for his glory, by his blessed spirit, to your present peace, comfort and stability of mind, for Christ Jesus, the Lord's sake. Amen.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE SOLAR ECLIPSE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 14TH, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"I form the light, and create darkness."—Isaiah xlv. 7.

WE are all expecting to-morrow to witness one of the greatest sights in the universe—the annular eclipse of the sun. It is possible that many of us shall have gone the way of all flesh before such a sight shall again be seen in this country, and we are therefore looking for it with some degree of expectation. It is probable that hundreds and thousands of the human race will be attracted by it, to study, for a few hours at least, the science of astronomy. Certain it is that our astronomers are making the most capital they possibly can of it by endeavouring to thrust it in every way under our notice, in order to induce us to make the sun, the moon and the stars a little more the object of our attention than they have been hitherto. Surely I need offer no apology whatever if religion comes forward to-day, and asks that attention should be drawn to her, even by the eclipse itself. Without a doubt, if there be sermons in stones, there must be a great sermon in the sun; and if there be books in the running brooks, no doubt there is many a huge volume to be found in a sun suffering eclipse. All things teach us, if we have but a mind to learn. There is nothing which we can see, or hear, or feel, which may not be the channels of great instruction to us. Let us see whether this may not lead us this morning into a train of thought which may, under God's blessing, be something far better to us than the seeing of an eclipse.

I shall note this morning, in addressing you, that since the Lord creates darkness as well as light; first of all, *eclipses of every kind are part of God's way of governing the world*; in the second place, we shall notice that since God creates the darkness as well as the light, we may conclude beyond a doubt that *he has a design in the eclipse—in the darkness as well as the light*; and then, thirdly, we shall notice that *as all things that God has created, whether they be light or whether they be dark, have a sermon for us, no doubt there are some sermons to be found in this*.

I. First of all, ECLIPSES ARE A PART OF GOD'S PLAN. In the olden times the ignorant people in England were frightened at an eclipse, they could not understand what it meant. They were quite sure that there was about to be a war, or a famine, or a terrible fire. They were absolutely certain that something fearful would happen; for they regarded it as being a prophecy of coming ills. They were totally at a loss to account for it, and knew nothing about the theory which now so satisfactorily sets our minds at rest. And you are aware, that till this day, in the East and in other parts of the world still in the ignorance of barbarism, an eclipse is looked upon as a very horrible and a very unaccountable thing. The

Hindooes still believe that a great dragon swallows the sun, and they may be seen by thousands plunging into their sacred river, the Ganges, praying to the gods that they may set the sun at liberty, that the dragon may be compelled to disgorge him. Hundreds of other most stupid and absurd theories are still prominently believed and held in different parts of the world, and I believe that here amongst a very great number of us, an eclipse is looked upon as something contrary to the general law of nature. Now, beloved, all that understand anything of God's works, know very well that eclipses are as much a part of nature's laws as the regular sunshine, that an eclipse is no deviation from God's plan, but that it is a necessary consequence of the natural motion of the moon and the earth around the sun and each other, that there should at some stated periods be eclipses, and when we see the eclipse to-morrow, we shall not look upon it as a miracle or anything out of the ordinary course of God's providence, but we shall say it was a necessity involved in the very plan whereby God governs the earth.

And now, beloved, I have only said these things to draw your attention to other eclipses. There are certain eclipses which happen in God's providence as well as in God's grace. As in nature an eclipse is part of God's plan, and is in fact involved in it, so we believe that in providence the eclipse shall sometimes overshadow the earth. I mean, the adversities, the wars, the famines, which sometimes fall on the human race, are but a part of God's divine plan of governing the earth, and have some beneficial object in their falling upon us.

First, let me invite your attention to *providence at large*. How many times have we seen providence itself eclipsed with regard to the whole race. Behold, the Lord creates the world, and placed man upon it. "Increase and multiply," is his law. Man multiplies, fills the earth, and replenishes it. The whole earth is populated, and its valleys and hills rejoice with the voice of song. On a sudden comes an eclipse. God sends a flood of rain; he draws the plugs of the great foundations of the mighty deep, and lets the water burst up upon the earth. He bids his rain descend, not in showers, but in whole cataracts at once, and the earth becomes a void waste covered with water, and afterwards a dreary swamp covered with mud. The whole human race, with the solitary exception of eight persons, having been swept away. This is what I mean by a providential eclipse. After that God again suffers man to multiply, and the earth to be replenished. Year after year the earth laughs with harvest, and the fields are made glad with God's bounties. For seven years following each other there is such an abundance of plenty on the earth that men know not how to gather up by handfulls the stores which God has cast. These seven years are overpassed, and lo! there comes an eclipse of God's bounty. There is no calf in the stall, the olive fails, and the fields yield no meat, all the land goes to Egypt to buy corn, for only in Egypt is there corn to be found. There is a great eclipse of God's bounty which happens to the world. But I need not stop to particularize the thousand instances that have happened in history. Nations have grown strong and mighty; anon there has come an eclipse of their glories, and all that has been builded has crumbled to the earth. Vast empires have been builded, and they have become great, and beneath their sway some of their people have become happy. Some savage conqueror from the north has descended with his barbarous hordes, and swept away every vestige of civilization, and the earth seems to have gone back hundreds of years. There has been a dark eclipse. Or it may have happened differently. A city is prosperous and rich. In one unhappy night a fire seizes upon it, and like the stubble before the flame, the whole city is consumed, and over the ashes of their houses the inhabitants sit down to weep and die. At another time a plague is upon the multitudes, and the pits are filled with the dead. Nations die and perish, and whole hosts of men are carried to their graves. Now, all these great eclipses of God's favour, these darkenings of the heavens, these sudden glooms that fall upon the human race, are parts of God's plan of providence. Beloved, believe me, it is God's providence, when his paths drop fatness, and when the valleys rejoice on every side. It is a part of his plan when the fields are covered with corn, and when there is grass for the cattle; but it is equally as much a part of the plan of his providence to reduce the earth to famine, and bring the human race to misery at certain stated seasons, when he sees that an eclipse is absolutely necessary for their good.

It is just the same with you in your own private concerns. There is a God of providence to you. Lo, these many years has he fed you, and has never denied you the supply of your wants. Bread has been given to you, and your water has

been sure. Your children have been about you. You have washed your feet with butter, you have rejoiced; you have stood fast in the ways of God, and in the ways of happiness. You have been able to say, "Our ways are ways of pleasantness, and all our paths are peace." You have not been, of all men, the most miserable, but in some respects connected with your life, and blessed by God's providence, you have been the happiest amongst the human race; and now a dark cloud has fallen upon you. The sunlight of God's providence has set while it was yet noon. When you were rejoicing in the brightness of your light, on a sudden a midday-midnight has fallen upon you, to your horror and dismay. You are made to say, "Whence does all this evil come upon me? Is this also sent of God?" Most assuredly it is. Your penury, your sickness, your bereavement, your contempt, all these things are as much ordained for you, and settled in the path of providence, as your wealth, your comfort, and your joy. Think not that God has changed. It involves no change of the sun when an eclipse overshadows it. The sun has not moved from its predestined spot. There standeth it, fixed and secure; or if it be true that it moveth, still it moveth with such regularity that to us it seemeth still. Beloved, so it is with God. It may be that his purposes are moving onward to some great and distant goal, which yet we cannot see, circling around himself in some greater circle than human knowledge yet can guess; but this is certain, that, so far as we are concerned, God is the same, and of his years there is no end, and from his fixed and settled path he hath not swerved. His glory is undimmed, even when eye cannot see it. His love is just as bright, even when the shinings of it are concealed. He hath not moved to the right hand nor to the left. With the Father of lights there is no variableness, neither the shadow of turning. He abideth fast and fixed, though all things pass away. Let me confide then in him. Eclipses in providence, like eclipses in nature, are but a part of his own grand plan, and necessarily involved in it.

I suppose that it is impossible that the earth should revolve around the sun, and that the moon should spin continually round the earth, in the same plane of their orbit, without there being eclipses. Since God has made the ellipse, or the circle, the great rule of nature, it is impossible but that eclipses should occur. Now, did you ever notice that in providence the circle is God's rule still. The earth is here to-day; it will be in the same place this day next year; it will go round the circle; it gets no further. It is just so in providence. God began the circle of his providence in Eden. That is where he will end. There was a paradise on earth, when God began his providential dealings with mankind; there will be a paradise at the end. It is the same with your providence. Naked came ye forth from your mother's womb, and naked must ye return to the earth. It is a circle. Where God has begun, there will he end; and as God has taken the rule of the circle in providence, as well as in nature, eclipses must be sure to occur. Moving in the predestined orbit of divine wisdom, the eclipse is absolutely and imperatively necessary in God's plan of government. Troubles must come; afflictions must befall; it must needs be that for a season ye should be in heaviness, through manifold temptations.

But I have said, that *eclipses must also occur in grace*, and it is so. God's rule in grace is still the circle. Man was originally pure and holy; that is what God's grace will make him at last. He was pure when he was made by God in the garden. That is what God shall make him, when he comes to fashion him like unto his own glorious image, and present him complete in heaven. We begin our piety by denying the world, by being full of love to God; we often decline in grace, and God will bring us back to the state in which we were when we first began, so that we shall rejoice in none but Christ, and give our hearts to him as we did at first. Hence, there must be an eclipse in grace, because even there the circle seems to be the rule of God's gracious government.

Now beloved, you are in the eclipse some of you to-day. I hear you crying, "Oh that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me! I looked for light, but lo, darkness came; for peace, but behold, trouble. I said in my soul, my mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved. Lord, thou didst hide thy face, and I am troubled. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me. It was but yesterday that I could read my title clear; to-day my evidences are bedimmed, and my hopes clouded. Yesterday I could climb to Pisgah's top and view the landscape o'er, and count the fields that were flowing with milk and honey, and rejoice with confidence in my future inheritance. To-day my spirit sees no heaven, it has no

hopes, but many fears; no joys, but much distress;" and you are apt to say, dear friends, "Is this a part of God's plan with me? Can this be the way in which God would bring me to heaven?" Yes, it is even so. The eclipse of your faith, the darkness of your minds, the fainting of your hopes, all these things are but the parts of God's plan for making you ripe for the great inheritance into which you shall soon enter. These trials are but waves that wash you on to the rocks; they are but winds that waft your ship the more swiftly towards the desired haven. As David says in the psalm, so might I say to you, "So he bringeth them to their desired haven." By honour and dishonour, by evil report and by good report, by plenty and by poverty, by joy and by distress, by persecution and by comforts, by all these things is the life of your soul, and by each of these are you helped to hold on your way, and to be brought at last to the great goal and haven of your hopes. Oh! think not, Christian, that your sorrows are out of God's plan; they are necessary parts of it; and inasmuch as he will bring many heirs of God unto glory, it is necessary that through much tribulation he should bring them thither.

I have thus tried to bring out the first truth, that the eclipse is a part of God's government, and that our temporal afflictions, and our own sorrows of heart, are but a part of that grand scheme. Permit me to trespass on your patience one minute more, when I notice, that in God's great plan of grace to the world, it is just the same. Sometimes we see a mighty reformation worked in the church. God raises up men who lead the van of the armies of Jehovah. See! error flies before them like shadows before the sunlight. Behold! the strongest towers of the enemy are tottering to their fall. The shout of a King is heard in the midst, and the saints of the Lord take courage, that their great and final victory at last is come. A few more years and those reformers are dead, and their mantle has not fallen upon any. After great mountains come deep valleys. The sons of great men are often small and drivelling; so there cometh a poor lukewarm church. After the Philadelphian, state of love, there comes the Laodicean state of lukewarmness. The church sinks! and in proportion as she sinks the enemy advances. Victory! victory! victory's shout the hosts of hell; and pushing on their course, they drive back the Lord's host, and the world trembles as in the balances, for victory seems to be on the side of the enemy. Again there comes another time of refreshing, another Pentecost; some other leader is raised up of God. Another mighty judge is brought into Israel, to drive out the Hittites and the Amorites that have invaded God's Canaan.

Once more, the world rejoices and the creature that hath toiled so long, hopeth to be delivered from its bondage—alas! it sinks again. The rising hath its ebb, the summer hath its winter, and the joyous time hath its season of despondency to follow it; but, beloved, all this is a part of God's plan. Do you see how God governs the ocean? When he means to produce a flood-tide, he does not make the water come marching straight up upon the shore, but as you stand there you are absolutely certain that the sand will be covered, and that the flood will dash against the cliff at the foot of which you are standing. But you see a wave come marching up, and then it returns again, and then another wave, then it dies and rolls back and another follows it. Now, it is even so in the church of God. The day must be, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. But this must be accomplished by different waves, by up-growing and decrease, by multiplying and by division. It must be by triumph and by victory, by conquest and by defeat, that at last God's great purpose shall ripen, and the world shall become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ. Think not then that eclipses of our holy religion, or the failure of great men in the midst of us, or the decline of piety, is at all apart from God's plan; it is involved in it, and as God's great purpose moving in the circle to bring forth another gracious purpose on earth must be accomplished, so beloved, an eclipse must necessarily follow, being involved in God's very way of governing the world in his grace.

II. But, secondly, EVERYTHING THAT GOD DOES HAS A DESIGN. When God creates light he has a reason for it, and when he creates darkness he has a reason for it too. God does not always tell us his reason; he always has one. We call him a sovereign God, because sometimes he acts from reasons which are beyond our knowledge; but he is never an unreasoning God. It is according to the counsel of his will that he works; not according to his will, but according to the counsel of his will, to show you that there is a reason, a wisdom and counsel in everything that he does. Now I cannot tell you what is God's design in

eclipsing the sun to-morrow; we can see many gracious purposes answered by it in our minds, but I do not know of what use it is to the world. It may be that if there never were an eclipse some great change might happen in the atmosphere, something far beyond the reach of all philosophical knowledge at present, but which may yet be discovered. It may be that the eclipse, like the tornado and the hurricane, has its virtue in operating upon this lower world in some mysterious way, but that we know not. However, we are not left in any darkness about other kind of eclipses; we are quite certain that providential eclipses, and gracious eclipses, have both of them their reasons. When God sends a providential eclipse he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nought. When pestilence stalks through the land and sweeps away its myriads, think not that God has done an unthought-of act without an intention in it. When war, with its blood-red sword, sweeps the nations and lays the mother bleeding with her child, imagine not that this cometh in vain; God hath some design in all these things, and permit me to tell you what I believe to be God's design, when he sends troubles into the world, and when he sends troubles upon us. It is this, it is to draw our attention to himself. Well, said an old divine, "Nobody ever looks at the sun except when he is in an eclipse." You never thought about the sun yesterday; you will all of you be staring at him to-morrow. Pieces of smoked glass, telescopes, and all kinds of inventions down to a pail of water, will be used in order to look at the sun. Why don't you look at him when he is shining brightly? There is nothing interesting in that, because it is an ordinary object. Now do you not notice, that when everything goes well with the world they never think about God? People always get religious when they get into trouble. The churches were fuller in London when we had the cholera here, than they had been for many a long day. There were more ministers went to see sick people in those times than had ever been known before. People that never read their Bible, never prayed, never thought of going to God's house, were hurrying off to a place of worship, or reading their Bibles, or pretending at least to pray, though, afterwards, when it went away, they forgot all about it; yet they did think a little of it when they were in trouble. "Surely in trouble they will seek the Lord; in the day of their distress they will seek me early." Doubtless, we should entirely forget God, if it were not for some of those eclipses which now and then happen. God would not have his name remembered on earth at all by the race of man if he did not make them recollect his name, when he scourged it into them with his rod. Famine, pestilence, the sword, the flood, all these must come upon us to be terrible remembrancers, to make us think of the dread King who holds the thunders in his hand, and keeps the lightnings in his power. Doubtless, this is God's great design in his afflictive providences, to make us think of him. But there is another design. Sometimes troublous times tend to prepare the world for something better afterwards. War is an awful thing; but I doubt not, it purges the moral atmosphere, just as a hurricane sweeps away a pestilence. It is a fearful thing to hear of famine, or to fear of plague; but each of these things has some effect upon the human race. An evil generally goes to make room for a greater good. Men may bewail the fire of London, but it was the greatest blessing God could have sent to London. It burnt down a set of old houses that were placed so close together that it was impossible for them to be without the plague; and when these old things had been burnt down, there was then room for a healthier action; and there has been less plague, and less disease ever since. Many of the troubles that come to the great wide world, are meant to be like axes, to cut down some deadly upas tree, and lay it level with the ground. That tree, when it stood, scattered greater evil, though it scattered it gradually, than the injury which God sent on a sudden, did inflict, though it was more apparent to the mind, having come all at once. Ah, my hearer, God has sent thee providential trouble. Thou art not his child; thou dost not fear his name nor love him. Thou art saying, "Why has this trouble happened to me?" God has a gracious design in it. There are many men that are brought to Christ by trouble. Many a sinner has sought the Saviour on his sick bed who never would have sought him anywhere else. Many a merchant whose trade has prospered, has lived without God; he has been glad to find the Saviour when his house has tottered into bankruptcy. We have known many a person who could afford to despise God while the stream flowed smoothly on, but that same man has been compelled to bow his knee, and seek peace through the blood of Christ, when he has come into the whirlpool of distress, and the whirlwind of

trouble hath got hold upon him. There is a story told, that in the olden times, Artaxerxes and another great king were engaged in a furious fight. In the middle of the battle a sudden eclipse happened, and such was the horror of all the warriors, that they made peace there and then. Oh, if an eclipse of trouble should induce you to ground arms and seek to be reconciled unto God! Sinner, you are fighting against God, lifting the arm of your rebellion against him. Happy shall you be if that trouble which is now fallen upon you should lead you to throw down the weapons of your rebellion, and fly to the arms of God and say, "Lord have mercy upon me a sinner." It will be the best thing that thou hast ever had. Thy trouble will be far better to thee than joys could have been, if thy sorrows shall induce thee to fly to Jesus who can make peace through the blood of his cross. May this be the happy result of thine own troubles and sorrows.

But furthermore, *eclipses of grace have also their end and design.* The Christian asks why it is that God does not seem to favour him in his conscience as much as he did aforetime. "Why is it that I have not more faith? Why have the promises lost their sweetness? Why has the Word of God seemed to fail in its power in operating upon my soul? Why has God hidden his face from me?" Christian, it is that thou mayest begin to search thyself, and say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." God's people are afflicted in order that they may not go astray. "Before I was afflicted," said the Psalmist, "I went astray, but now have I kept thy Word." Leave a Christian alone, and he becomes like a piece of iron covered with rust; he loses all his brightness. Take the file of affliction, and once more the brightness becomes apparent. Christians without trouble would be like oysters without the sickness; they would not have produced pearls. The pearl oyster would have no pearl unless some disease had fallen upon it; and were it not that trouble lights upon the Christian, he would live without producing the pearl of a holy and contented piety. God's rods are improvers; when they are laid upon us they always mend us. God scarifies the Christian, that he may cleanse him of his weeds; he ploughs him deep that he may turn up the subsoil to the air, that the influence of the Divine Spirit may rest upon him. He puts us into the crucible and into the furnace, that the heat may burn away our dross, and may consume all our impurities. He sends us into the deep waters, that they may be like a sacred baptism to us, and may help in sanctifying us, by delivering us from our pride, our lust, our worldliness, and our conceit. Happy is the man who understands this—who knows that all things work together for good to them that love God, and believes that even an eclipse of God's countenance hath its end and design, in making him perfectly conformed to the image of Christ Jesus the Lord.

III. And now not to detain you longer, I have got a sermon or two more to preach to you from the eclipse. To-morrow, Christians, if you will just remember what I am about to say you will learn a useful lesson. What is that which will hide the sun from us to-morrow? It is the ungrateful moon. She has borrowed all her light from the sun month after month; she would be a black blot, if the sun did not shine upon her, and now see all the return she makes is, she goes impudently before his face and prevents his light from shining upon us. Do you know anything at all like that in your own history? Have you not a great many comforts which you enjoy upon earth that are just like the moon? They borrow all their light from the sun. They would be no comforts to you unless God shone in them and they reflected back the light from his countenance. What is your husband, your wife; what are your children, your friends, your house, your home? What are all these but moons that borrow their light from the sun? Oh how ungrateful it is when we let our comforts get before our God; no wonder that we get an eclipse when we put these things that God gave to be our comforts into God's own throne and make them our idols. Oh! if our children take half of our hearts, if our friends take away our souls from Jesus, if like it was with Solomon, the wife leads the heart astray, if our goods, our house, our lands become the object of our life, if we set our affections upon them instead of setting them upon the things above, no wonder that there is an eclipse. Oh! ungrateful heart that allows these moons of comfort to hide the sun. Old Master Brookes very prettily says, the husband gives his wife rings which she wears upon her finger as remembrances of his love. Suppose a wife should be so foolish as to love her jewels better than her husband, suppose she should set her heart more upon his love-tokens than upon his person, oh, what marvel if he should then take

the rings and the jewels away that she might again love him. It is even so with us; God loves his children and he gives us strong faith and gives us joy and comfort, and then if we begin to set our hearts upon these more than upon him, he will come and take them away, for saith he, "I must have all thy love. I gave thee these to win thy love, not to rob me of it, and inasmuch as thou dost divert thine heart into them, instead of allowing thy love to flow in one channel towards me; I will stop up the channel of thy comfort, that thy heart may cleave to me, and to me alone. Oh, for a heart that is like Anacreon's lyre, that would sing of love alone, that whatever subject you tried to bring to it, it would not resound with anything save love! Oh, that our hearts were like that towards God, so that when we tried to sing of comforts and of mercies, our hearts would only sing of God! Oh, that every string were made so divine, that it would never trill to any finger but the finger of the chief player upon my stringed instruments, the Lord Jesus Christ! Oh, that we had a heart like David's harp, that none but David could play; a soul that none but Jesus could make glad and cause to rejoice! Take care Christian, lest thy comforts like the moon eclipse thy sun. That is a sermon for thee, remember it, and be wise from it.

And let the Christian recollect another sermon. Let him take his child out, and when he takes him outside the door, and he sees the sun begin to grow dark and all things fade away, and a strange colour coming over the landscape, the child will begin to cry and say, "Father the sun is going out, he is dying; we shall never have any light again." And as gradually the black moon creeps over the sun's broad surface and there remains only a solitary streak of light, the tears run down the child's eyes as he says, "The sun is nearly quenched; God has blown it out, it will never shine upon us again. We shall have to live in darkness;" and he would begin to weep for sorrow of heart. You would touch your child on the head, and say, "No, my little boy, the sun has not gone out; it is only the moon passing across its face; it will shine bright enough presently." And your boy would soon believe you; and as he saw the light returning, he would feel thankful, and would believe what you had said, that the sun was always the same. Now, you will be like a child to-morrow. When you get into trouble you will be saying, "God has changed." Then let God's Word speak to you as unto children, and let it say, "No, he has not changed; with him is no variableness, neither shadow of a turning."

"My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."

And now, last of all, a total eclipse is one of the most terrific and grand sights that ever will be seen. We shall not see the eclipse here in all its majestic terror; but when the eclipse of the sun is total it is sublime. Travellers have given us some records of their own experience. When the sun has been setting far away, the mountains seemed to be covered with darkness, except upon their summits, where there was just a streak of light, when all below was swathed in darkness. The heavens grew darker and darker and darker, until at last it became as black as night, and here and there the stars might be seen shining, but beside them there was no light, and nothing could be discerned. I was thinking that if on a sudden the sun should set in ten-fold darkness, and never should rise again, what a horrid world this would be! If to-morrow the sun should actually die out, and never shine any more, what a fearful world this would be to live in! And then the thought strikes me—Are there not some men, and are there not some here, who will one day have a total eclipse of all their comforts? Thank God, whatever eclipse happens to a Christian, it is never a total eclipse: there is always a ring of comfort left; there is always a crescent of love and mercy to shine upon him. But mark thee, sinner, when thou comest to die, bright though thy joys be now, and fair thy prospects, thou wilt suffer a total eclipse. Soon shall your sun set, and set in everlasting night. A few more months, and your gaiety shall be over; your dreams of pleasure shall be dissipated by the terrible wailing of the judgment-trump; a few more months, and this gay dance of revelry of earth shall all have passed away; and that passed away, remember, you have nothing to expect in the world to come but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." Can you guess what the Saviour meant, when he said "outer darkness, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth?" Can any tell except those eclipsed spirits

that have been these many years writhing in the torments of eternal judgment; can any tell what is meant by that "Outer darkness!" It is darkness so thick, that hope, which lives anywhere, cannot dart even a feeble ray through its impenetrable gloom; it is a darkness so black that you have no candle of your own fancy, no fair imagination to illuminate. A horror thicker than the darkness of Egypt, a darkness that may be felt will get hold upon the spirit. "Depart, ye cursed," shall roll, like volumes of cloud and darkness over the accursed spirit. "Cursed, cursed, cursed," pronounced by the Sacred Trinity thrice, shall come, come like a three-fold ocean of unutterable depth, and shall in its caverns hide the soul beyond the reach of hope.

I am but talking in simile and figure of a matter which none of us can thoroughly understand, but which each of us must know, unless we are saved by grace. My fellow-sinner, hast thou to-day any hope that when death shall come thou shalt be found in Christ? If thou hast none, beware and tremble; if thou hast any, take care it is "a good hope through grace." If thou hast no hope, but art seeking one, hear me while I tell thee the way of salvation. Jesus Christ, the Son of David, became man; he lived in this world, he suffered and he died; and the object of his death was this—that all who believe may be saved. What you are required to believe is simply this. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: do you feel that you are a sinner? If so, he came to save you. All you have to do—and that grace makes you do—is to believe that he came to save sinners, and therefore came to save you. Mark, he did not come to save all; he came to save *sinners*. All men who can claim the title of sinners, Christ came to save. If you are too good to be a sinner, then you have no part in this matter; if you are too proud to confess that you are a sinner, then this has nothing to do with you; but if with a humble heart, with a penitential lip, you can say, "Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner," then Christ was punished for your sins, and you cannot be punished for them. Christ has died instead of you; believe on him, and you may go your way rejoicing that you are saved now, and shall be saved eternally. May God the Holy Spirit first teach you that you are a sinner, then lead you to believe that Christ died for sinners, and then apply the promise, so that you may see that he died for you; and that done, you may "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," and your sun shall never set in an eclipse, but shall set on earth to rise with tenfold splendour in the upper sphere, where it shall never know a cloud, a setting, or an eclipse.

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"VESSELS OF MERCY"!!

A Sermon

PREACHED ON TUESDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 3, 1857,

BY THE REV. J. J. WEST, M.A.,

(Rector of Winchelsea, Sussex.)

AT ALL SAINT'S CHURCH, SPICER STREET, LONDON.

"The vessels of mercy which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles!"—Romans ix. 23, 24.

FIRST of all observe! the characters that are spoken of, "*vessels of mercy*!" These vessels are distinctively said to have been the ones whom God had "*afore prepared unto glory*." In the first place, then, I proceed to preach the doctrine enunciated in the text, and afterwards will endeavour to set before you the *experimental* part of it as it has been opened up to me. Before all worlds God appointed a *church*. Before the fall in Adam everything was decreed, and fore-ordained of JEHOVAH! The election of grace were the men and women afore prepared unto glory! CHRIST the Saviour of His church was everlastingly appointed by the ETERNAL TRINITY to be the one only salvation of that people so saved in purpose and decree. Everything was predestinated concerning HIM and His people! The very moment when he was to die upon the cross was appointed of God—and while we know from Scripture that Pilate and the Jews were the persons who delivered Him up to be nailed on the cross, yet, my hearers, we must bear in mind that they were but the instruments employed to carry out the wonderful designs of God. For as we read in one of the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles:—"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Or as it is in Greek, "delivered by the determinate fore-appointment of God"—a more telling word than "*foreknowledge*." The Arminian tries to quibble on the word "*fore-know*," but I tell the Arminian whether he is a Greek scholar or not, that he is in utter ignorance if he does not confess that the word in the Greek, where our English version has "*foreknowledge*" is "*fore-appointment*!" Therefore I take that text in Acts ii. 23—(and as if I was now reading it out of the Greek Testament, render it thus)—"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and FORE-APPOINTMENT of GOD ye have taken"—(and ye must take Him, God has appointed that ye should take Him)—"*and by wicked hands have crucified and slain*." The Eternal God appointed and decreed that! Decreed that His SON should die! Decreed the vast transactions of Calvary's cross! Decreed that Pilate even against his own conscientious convictions, (coward as he was on the judgment-seat) should yield to the rabble cry, and acquiesce in their demand! But God's everlasting purpose was over all this, DEITY was carrying on His own designs. THE FATHER, THE SON, and THE HOLY GHOST, the Trinity in Unity, the Unity in Trinity delivered up the helpless, the meek, the lowly Christ then and there to die for such a hell-deserving sinner as I am—to die to make an all-sufficient atonement for the sins of the people for whom He died on the cross.

And, my hearers, there is something distinguishing in the history of the cross. Two thieves crucified with the one Saviour! one on the right hand and the other on the left. Both had been joining together in blasphemy and insult. But as Augustus Toplady so beautifully expresses it—(in one of his published sermons—Christ the Almighty God, Jesus the sinner's Friend and the sinner's Saviour)—"having amidst all His personal agonies detained Himself on earth, until He had looked a dying blasphemer into repentance"—and as I may add, forced the prayer into the penitent's inmost heart—"Lord,

remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." He could not die until He had done that. I believe that in these three crosses we have the largest history possible of the TRUTH! We have there the Christ of the everlasting covenant—we have two men on either side, both equally bad, both equally convicted, both felons, as we should say in England, against the laws of their country, and suffering the penalties of their offences; yet the Lord takes one and leaves the other. Will you blink the doctrine of election? "*Know ye not that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.*" He was in the one; He was not in the other. And because He was in the one, the one must know it. Do you not think Christ loved the penitent thief before all words, as He did Mary Magdalene? None could be worse than either the thief or she. There may be some very bad ones here to-night; but none can be worse than the dying thief or Mary Magdalene! Why *seven devils* had been cast out of her.

But I am getting away from the text. My point is, "*afore prepared unto glory.*" The penitent thief was! Mary Magdalene was! Manasseh was! How many of you are? But we know well that *mere doctrine* will not feed the sheep. We have plenty of doctrine. Men are getting too cunning in their pulpits now not to preach *doctrine*. We churchmen should be guilty of perjury if we did not preach *sound truth*. I am too old a soldier in the ranks of the *faithful Church of England* now to know that the people of God who really value us in our pulpits do not want to hear *only* about doctrines. We have got doctrine insisted on in our *Prayer Books*. The Articles of the Church of England have doctrine quite sufficient. We have ample doctrine in the desk; therefore, we will have a little experience and practice in the pulpit. We have liberty in the pulpit. No one can call me to order for what I preach, if I preach according to the Book. *That* is the sword of the Spirit, bound and girt upon my thigh as a soldier in the pulpit. Now, I leave doctrine, and come to the "*vessels of mercy.*" Here is something to encourage and comfort the "*poor of the flock.*" What is the meaning of a vessel? A vessel is that which holds something. A vessel of mercy! What a sweet description of a chosen sinner—*elect in Christ before all worlds!* What is the thing he has to hold? A vessel is to hold whatever is put into it—water or anything else! Do you hold MERCY? Now, do I get into your heart? "*Vessels of MERCY afore prepared unto glory.*" We are empty vessels in ourselves! and we can only receive the thing that is poured into us. The publican cried, "*God be merciful to me a sinner:*" I believe that that man received the inpouring of mercy and of love! "*A vessel of mercy.*"

Let me go into the subject of mercy. I never can choose a subject! There is a wide difference between a minister *taking a text* and a *text taking a minister*. My brother, John Wallinger, the faithful preacher of the Gospel in Bath, congratulated me one day because I had been taught the difference between *my* taking a text and a text taking *me*. When I came from Cambridge, with my sermon, written nicely out, in my pocket, it generally took me through the week to find a text for the Sunday. But since the Lord has, as I trust, sent me to preach the Gospel, I sometimes never get a text till the hymn is just concluding when I am in the pulpit. A "*vessel of mercy!*" How is it with regard to you—you that are sitting in those pews? You *all deserve* to be damned. I know not to whom I am speaking—I may be preaching to many moral pharisees, scribes, priests; I am preaching to many persons of whom I know nothing; I know not who may be here. But mark me—you are *all* deserving of eternal damnation; and you will have it except you are a "*vessel of mercy!*" If you are a vessel of mercy, you must be made to desire to know that you are such a vessel, and that you must have something poured into you. Can anything be more simple and plain than the words I have before me? And depend upon it, this is the only way profitably to preach the Gospel. It is one thing to be charmed with eloquence. It may be a delight to go into the House of Commons and hear the eloquence of a Gladstone, or into the Courts of Law and hear a Theisger speak, but in the pulpit you must be content to hear plain, simple, old truths spoken, to have things told you that benefit you, for the test is coming upon every one of us—a *dying bed* and a *dying hour!* And now I ask the plain and simple question, are we "*vessels of mercy?*" I know a godly farmer in Kent who wrote to me the other day, and told me

"that the thing he longed to know was, whether he was a son of God, for," says he, "sons go to heaven, servants to hell." Do you want to know whether you are each a vessel of mercy? and I desire to preach not to please you, but to be made a blessing to you. It makes no difference to me whether you despise me, or whether you love me, (as I had rather you do,) and receive me as a messenger of God to your soul's eternal good; but I insist upon it, you must have the *experimental reality* of knowing whether you are a "*vessel of mercy*." And if you are a "*vessel of mercy*" you will know what it is to have mercy, or the *desire* for mercy poured in. You will know this in your solitary moments, and cry before God—not to be seen of men, not to adopt the fashion of the day, making broad the phylactery and standing at the corners of the street, but "*When thou prayest enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*" There is no gew-gaw show in this! I believe, now, that many men for show of profession can pray by the hour together, but to my mind the sweetest prayer is, "*Our Father which art in heaven,*" and the sweetest collect, after all, is in the Bible, "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*"

If, my hearers, you understand the truth that I am enunciating, you must feel your guilt; you must know your depravity; you must have come up to the standard of Isaiah's measure, that, "*From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.*" They tell us the Duke of Cambridge, the commander-in-chief, has altered the standard for recruits for the army; but my Commander-in-chief never intends to alter His. It stands written in this Book, that "*From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.*" Now, when guilt has taken possession of the heart, when sin has been brought home with the convincing power of the Holy Ghost, when we are *taught* our depravity and *made* to feel our sin, then it is we feel our need—and hope that we are made "*vessels of mercy.*" I may quote a verse from Kent, that has been most blessed to my own soul in many a trying hour:—

"What, though he feels himself depraved,
Yet he's in Christ a sinner saved,
And 'tis a sign of life within,
To groan beneath the power of sin."

Am I going down to too low a standard? I am not asking whether you are Calvinists or anything else. I am not asking whether you hold the doctrines of grace, but I ask you, are you *laid low* at the foot of mercy? are you laid low, stripped of all your own creature-merit and righteousness, with the one cry in your heart—

"Mercy, good-Lord, mercy I ask,
This is the total sum;
For mercy, Lord, is all my suit;
Lord, let Thy mercy come!"

That verse is in the version of the Psalms; I delight to think that the church has got such an experimental verse as that in her own Hymn Book at the end of the Prayer Book. Oh! if the bishops, and the priests, and the deacons of the Church of England carry that out in their parishes, throughout the length and breadth of the land, we should "indeed be terrible as an army with banners" against the devil and the whole host of the enemy. A "*vessel of mercy*!" Now, what is a minister of the Gospel? "*We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*" Here, then, is the description of a vessel in the pulpit for vessels in the pews. I am sure my brother in the desk will agree with me, that when he and I are enabled to come up into this pulpit, full of that which proclaims mercy to perishing sinners, we shall be *made* acceptable, despite the devil and all his schemes against us, if vessels of mercy "*afore prepared unto glory*" sit in the pews. We shall have something good for you; we shall have "*A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.*" We shall have a feast, but the Lord must teach us *our own want* of mercy before we can proclaim it to the people! We do not stand up here like the bigot priest, full of himself,

but we stand here like the great apostle who wrote the text—"earthen vessels"—"*vessels of mercy.*" Listen to me—How sweet is the thought, that when Paul speaks of *sinners* he speaks of himself as "*the chief of sinners,*" when he speaks of *saints*, he takes the *lowest* place in that scale, "*less than the least of all saints*"—and, yet, though "*less than the least of all—is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*" How I would still dwell upon the thought—"vessels of mercy!" because it is such a sweet and full Scripture! It only contains *three* words, but to me it seems to be the very synopsis of the *whole gospel*, the epitome of the whole magnificent charter of salvation—"VESSELS OF MERCY AFORE PREPARED UNTO GLORY."

Suppose there had been no mercy. We read the other day in the various newspapers of the fall of Delhi—of the victory that had been obtained by the British bayonet. The flag of victory now floats upon those battlements, where before, butchery, and cruelty, and cowardice, and Sepoy and Mahomedan devilishness had deluged the place with blood. We have heard that the British soldier, blessed by the God of battles, had been able to subdue that celebrated fortress, and to carry it at the point of the bayonet. We have heard of those in our own country who have been making speeches upon the occasion, discussing whether or not mercy should be shown to the rebels. It is no subject for me in this place. It is a subject for a senator on the floor of the House of Commons to discuss, whether mercy should be shown or not, to Nena Sahib, if he be taken prisoner. But the thing I have to proclaim to Sepoys in London, (for in one sense you are mutineers,) is, that *MERCY* will be shown you, if you are a "*VESSEL OF MERCY.*" It all hinges upon *THAT*. I am not going to turn Methodist in the pulpit; I am not going to coax and woo you, and try to persuade you to come; but I tell you, you shall come, if you are a "*vessel of mercy.*" I tell the greatest sinner in the church, that! There may be some Mary Magdalene straggled in here to-night to hear the babbler from Sussex; there may be some Manasseh sitting among these pews; there may be some Saul of Tarsus too!—I tell you, that even for such an one, (if it is to-night a time of favour to hear and receive the knowledge of the truth, if it is to-night a time of favour to any one "*vessel of mercy,*") that that mercy shall be poured into your soul, whether you *will* or *not*. Toplady says, "a child of God is like a tumbler without a foot; it can only stand as it is *held up.*" If it were not held up it would hold nothing, and would fall over. So, you can only contain mercy in you, as you are a "*vessel of mercy*" held up. "*Hold Thou me up,*" (said an experimental sinner,) *and I shall be safe.*" No man more experimentally knew than David did, that he needed the upholding power of God. "The man after God's own heart"—such is his description in the Bible—guilty of the double sin of adultery and murder had the experimental cry afterwards forced from his very soul—"Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe; and I will have respect unto Thy statutes continually."

My hearers, it is a great mercy to know that God will teach His *own people*, not by halves, but entirely and fully the *TRUTH*. It is the blessed statement of a man of God, that "*if things were otherwise than they are they would be all wrong*"—everything is just as it should be—all things are working together for good to those that love God—everything is just working together to effect His own purposes. You may be tried by man or by woman; you may be persecuted; you may be belied; you may be assailed on all sides—listen to this—"The wrath of man shall praise Thee."—"The remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain." I may be speaking here to some who are suffering for the truth's sake—reviled. It is so amid the masses of London—it is so in the country also. If we are made faithful, we are attacked by all sorts and conditions of men. And yet we stand. "*Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.*" I may repeat here a text that I was preaching on with some comfort the other Sunday to my own home flock. Talking of the persecutions of the people of God, the astonished king says to his counsellors—"Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose."—(my hearers, do not pass from that word, "*loose,*" in a hurry; I shall go back again to it)—"*walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*" I

scarcely dare to annotate such a magnificent Scripture as that. Its climax seems to be in its own inspired statement, and needs no exposition from such a tongue as mine.—Yet it may be for the comfort of the “*vessels of mercy*” now hanging upon my lips that I should say a word on it. I may be speaking to some brother or sister now in the furnace, in the experience of the narrow pathway. Do you know what it is to walk loose in the midst of the fire? in the sweet liberty of the Gospel, loose in the fire? What was it that loosed the bonds which the wretched king had commanded to bind their bodies with? What was it that enabled them to bask in the glorious liberty of Zion’s children? WHO WAS THEIR COMPANION IN THAT FIRE? Nebuchadnezzar had not cast the fourth into the fire? but THE FOURTH CAME into the fire to save HIS CHILDREN THERE. It was the persecutions against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego—God’s love—that brought the “FOURTH” there, that brought Him—shall I say, like a feeling mother to the bedside of her crying and pained child? Such a simile would not do; no mother could fully enter into *that* feeling. It was LOVE DIVINE!! The *Watcher* had allowed Nebuchadnezzar to go as far as God intended; and when His children were in that fire—then—“*the form of the fourth was like the SON OF GOD.*” As to the companionship of men and women, Hart is quite right in what he says—

“Companions if we find,
Alas! how soon they’re gone!”

But the companionship to the “*vessels of mercy*” of the Son of God is most fully prized and known when they are in the fire, or when they are in the den of “lions.” I can imagine Daniel in the lion’s den. You may have heard the other day of a tiger that escaped out of a van in London and injured two boys. The papers have been full of it. Have you not heard something from a better paper of Daniel in the den of lions, and how he escaped? The Lord allowed Darius to have his lions in the den, and He allowed him to throw Daniel into the den. They could not stop Daniel praying; he would pray. He was no hypocrite about it, for his windows were all open, and they could all see him pray. They, therefore, put him into the den. Oh! what a beautiful picture! The picture of a “*vessel of mercy.*” Look at Daniel in the den of lions—the savage beasts, the monster quadrupeds, before whom everything would tremble—look at Daniel patting as it were their backs as you would a domestic dog. “*Through faith, the saints are said to have “stopped the mouths of lions,” and “out of weakness were made strong.”*” What a wonderful thing is a saved man! a man just as bad naturally as his neighbour, but “*a vessel of mercy afore prepared unto glory!*”

My hearers, I have not nearly got into the depth of the subject that this great verse sets before me, but I ask you once, again, as I did before, what do you know of guilt? what do you know of sin? what do you know of temptation? what do you know of heart depravity? These are the things that teach men the value of the blood. For my own part—(and it is as needful for me to preach it to a London church, as I am compelled continually to insist on it to my own home flock)—I am sick of professors. Toplady felt this. He said, “*profession is not possession.*” Now we are living in a peculiar day. It is the fashion now to be evangelical. I know what the word, “*evangelical*” means in its *classicality*, but what it means now, as applied indiscriminately to carnal professors—I believe is, arrant hypocrites. The Gospel remains the same as of old; and the only way for a man to value Christ, and to long for the blood that cleanseth from all sin, is to be made to feel himself a wicked, vile, carnal, sensual, sinner—nothing else. But, then, look at the love that has “*afore prepared unto glory the vessels of mercy!*” Look how in a previous chapter the Apostle speaks, Romans viii. 35: “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*” Why, NOTHING CAN!! I surely have preached to you before, that a question in the Bible is a peculiar idiom, by which it is intended to give a sentence a stronger force; so that when the word comes in the shape of a question, “*Who can separate us from the love of Christ?*” the Apostle means that *nothing can separate us from His love!* It is not as we say in common conversation, “*How do you do?*” But

it is, if I may so call it, a strong affirmation! meaning that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Now, let us see how he follows that out—he gives a list of what the Church knows! The Apostle says, "TRIBUTATION?"—"Shall that separate us? why, it draws us nearer." I was preaching at home on Sunday on this text, "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*" Now, follow me here; "*Examine yourselves*"—"prove your own selves." Prove your own selves by trial, prove your own selves by temptation, prove your own selves by a feeling sense of sin—the only way to prove a child of God. It is the burnt child that dreads the fire. The best way to make a little tiresome child, that will play with the fire, not to do so, is to let it burn its fingers. "*Tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*" shall these separate us? Not any one of them. Now there is a large congregation here before me, and I like to be a *separator in the churches*. I like, wherever I go, to "take forth the precious from the vile," and I ask how many there are who understand the Apostle's statement? "*As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*" "*We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*" What is the church called in Zechariah? "*The flock of slaughter!*" And how is that expounded—you, O! poor of the flock—slaughtered ones? "*Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors.*" This is what the "*vessels of mercy*" alone know. Now, what are "*these things?*" "*Tribulation!*" that stands first. "*Tribulation!*" What troubles in the family! troubles within! troubles in soul! troubles without—contempt and hatred as they despised my Blessed Master—they hated and spake evil of Him! All these things trouble us. Flesh and blood rise up; flesh and blood like to be comfortable! But it is trouble that makes the promise sweet. Look, how sweetly Newton was taught, when he says—

"Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer,
Trials bring me to His feet;
Lay me low and keep me there."

I would not give a straw for your Christianity if you know not what trouble is. Then, the Apostle adds, "*I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" "*Which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!*" There is the treasury! Look where the treasure is deposited, "*The love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

Thus far have I gone through the first portion of the text on "*the vessels of mercy which He had afore prepared unto glory.*" Can there be any subject like this! I cannot express what I would express on such a tremendous Scripture as this quarter of a verse contains! "*A vessel of mercy*" carries with it the reality of guilt! If there was no guilt—if there was no sin!—We could not know the meaning even of the word "*mercy.*"—I ask not Dr. Johnson's Dictionary to tell me the definition of the word—but I take it in its gospel meaning—yea, I look into the dictionary of my own heart, and feeling guilt, depravity, and sin—convinced of sin, and depravity, knowing what is myself I am—I look to the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, and then can understand something of its meaning!—Mercy!!

There is another portion in the text that I must glance at before I finish, upon the subject of "*calling.*" "*Even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.*" I have no occasion here to enter on this subject "of Jew and Gentile." There is only one church—whether a man be a Jew, a Gentile, a Churchman, or a Nonconformist, if he is in Christ, that is the point. There may be great discussions about whether Jews are to be suffered to sit in Parliament or not. That is a question of politics. But there can be no question that some Jews shall sit in heaven, there can be no question that some Gentiles shall be there also. Therefore, the Apostle John—now, hear me, for it is important—the Apostle John, in a controverted

passage in his First Epistle, says, "*And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.*" Not as it is in our English, "*for the sins of the whole world,*" but "*for the whole world.*" The Apostle John knew the Jews had got into a foolish feeling that no Gentile could be saved. They had got a supposition that only Jews could enter the kingdom of heaven; therefore, the Apostle John, who was the only then surviving Apostle corrects this statement—"*If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father*"—(we have an Advocate, whether Jews or Gentiles); and, if we are "*vessels of mercy, afore prepared unto glory*"—"He is the propitiation for our sins"—(for the Jews' sins) "*and not for ours only, but for the whole world,*" i.e. for the whole election of grace," in every part of the world.

But I pass from the subject of Jews and Gentiles, and shall finish with the subject of "*calling.*" If I were to turn to different passages in Scripture upon the subject of effectual calling, I should be preaching here a long time, but I will only take one; one of the most incontrovertible passages in the whole Bible—one of the most convincing Scriptures that can possibly be adduced before a Christian audience—I mean in the 2nd Epistle to Timothy, "*Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*" Now, mark me! salvation is first, calling is second. Like precedence in the different grades of society, where the duke at the queen's levee precedes the marquis, the marquis the earl, the earl the viscount, the viscount the baron, so in the gospel before me, salvation ranks before calling. What then, as a minister of God proclaiming the truth to you, do I deduce from this text? What, as a messenger of the church do I proclaim to you from this pulpit top!—*that salvation precedes calling!* and that therefore, every saved sinner *must and shall be called.* If, then, you and I receive an effectual call, it is an evidential test that we are saved, yea, have been saved from all eternity. I may give you another test on this point. *Desire is an evidence!* The cry, "*LORD, is it I?*" "*LORD, is it I?*" That question was asked on a memorable occasion of old! O! that I might so preach now as to bring into your hearts by the power of grace that intensity of desire—"LORD is it I?" "*Am I a vessel of mercy?*" "*Am I a saved sinner?*" "*Am I a called one?*" Jehovah has everlastingly saved His Church—and He will CALL His people! "*not according to our works!*" Pride strives for mastery! It was pride that made poor Eve ensnare her husband in the Garden of Eden. "*Ye shall be as gods!*" She could not withstand that, and the devil caught her in the snare. Beware of pride! the pride of works, the pride of self, the pride of other things. Men, professing men, and *carnal* men, are proud of their fancied works! proud of their charities—like to be talked of as men who give their money to this, and that, and the other—who can distribute tracts, for a pretence make long prayers, attempt even expositions of the Bible, and all this "*to be seen of men!*" O! my hearers, the pride of works is a besetting snare. But "*by grace ye are saved!*" Let me, therefore, like a revising barrister, who strikes out of the list of voters every one not entitled to a vote, so get into your consciences that everything false and unsound may be struck out and that you may know the TRUTH and live on it. "*Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*"

Now, in finishing, the point I desire to set before you is this:—Are you called? I shall rejoice, though I may know nothing of it, if you can say, "*I am.*" But I shall not have been a useless minister in this pulpit to-night, if by my feeble instrumentality I send away some uncommonly puzzled to know whether they are called or not. Like a child playing with a box of puzzles, I put it before you, and may God teach you to put it together. I wish I could repeat by heart that splendid passage in one of Toplady's sermons, where Christ called Matthew at the receipt of custom. I can give you just an outline of it. Toplady draws a picture of Matthew, the publican. He was a tax-gatherer—sitting at the receipt of custom, as you men of business go to your counting-houses, and was taking the toll from the passers to and fro the sea of Galilee. But amongst this crowd of persons a stranger happened to pass, and from His mouth proceeded words different from all the others;

VESSELS OF MERCY.

and, to use the words of Augustus Toplady, Christ accosted him with that unexpected, but "resistless word," "Follow me," it touched the publican's heart—he left his till-box and followed the Son of God. Have you had "Follow me" said to you? You know it, my hearers, if you have. There will be no occasion for me to give you signs and evidences. There will be no occasion for me to pass before you the why, and the how, and the when. You may depend upon it that one of the sweetest tests of discipleship (and here I go down to the experience of the very babe in Christ)—is to be exercised about *whether you are one for whom Christ died!* I cannot imagine a sweeter experience, though it is a trying one, than that of Newton—

" 'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

Now, I shall close, dear hearers. The time is come to stop. Perhaps some of you will say, 'Spicer Street is out of the way.' Why, you do not come half so far some of you as my home flock do. True, it is, as I said to my brother, this evening, 'Spicer Street is very dirty to-day,' but not half so unclean as your hearts. You can escape the mud of Spicer Street in a cab, but it is only the blood of the Everlasting Covenant that will make your heart clean. I cannot help saying to-night, it is a great comfort to me to see so many here on such a wet evening. We were told at one time that Spicer Street was so out of the way. I never fell in with that feeling. I never would give a straw for people who can only go to a convenient church! I know that people must travel for the Gospel; if the Gospel is not worth coming for, it is not worth having. I am sure you will bear with my honest expression of feeling. You will not mind the distance to Spicer Street. I love the church—the Gospel is in the place. I shall read this text now, and finish, and may God bless it to your souls. "*Vessels of mercy*"—I wonder how many there are here to-night! What a type!—"vessels of mercy!" We read the other day in the *Gazette*, that the Queen has honoured one or two deserving men by raising them from the rank of commoners to the peerage. One of these is the great historian, Macaulay, whom she has raised to a barony of the realm. That is a poor title compared with a "*vessel of mercy*!" Much as I respect Lord Macaulay, much as I admire his talent, much as I delighted to hear his eloquence when I heard him in the House of Commons, yet, what a poor title is his, compared with that of "*a vessel of mercy*"—Registered in the Book of God, who hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, "*KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS!*" The commoner has been raised by his earthly sovereign, and ranks amongst his peers, for merit, for talent—but the peers of heaven are not so—you and I, if saved, are raised for nothing of our own—our's is the exaltation of *grace alone*, so Toplady sings—

" Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simple, to THE cross I cling;
Naked, come to THEE for dress;
Helpless, look to THEE for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, SAVIOUR, or I die."

"*A vessel of mercy afore prepared unto glory.*" "*The vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.*"

God bless the Gospel through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Exeter Hall Sermons.

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 3, 1858,

BY

THE REV. JAMES SPENCE.

"The glorious gospel of the blessed God."—1 TIM. I. 11.

It is beautiful to see age and experience affectionately giving wise and holy counsel to youth and inexperience : and it is perhaps more beautiful to see youth, full of manly vigour and buoyant energy, humbly and gratefully receiving the counsel of hoary hairs, and striving to follow it. At the time when St. Paul wrote this epistle, he must have been considerably advanced in life, while Timothy was still comparatively a young man. The relationship between them was spiritual, and therefore sacred and tender. The Apostle looked upon the youthful evangelist as his son, cherished him, counselled him, and encouraged him as his own son ; and Timothy looked up to the Apostle, and loved him as a father. Thus the religion of Jesus ever hallows the ties which bind human hearts together ; adopts, sanctifies, and ennobles the influence of true friendship.

St. Paul had been driven away from Ephesus before he had fully accomplished all that he had designed and wished to do. Timothy was left in that city for a time, and the Apostle took the earliest opportunity of giving suitable instructions how to complete the work which he himself had begun. This epistle contains these instructions. He warns him against false teachers, and certain errors which they had introduced in opposing the Gospel under a pretended zeal for the Law. The Apostle reminds Timothy, that whatever they might teach or say about the Law, there was no opposition, and could be none, between it and the Gospel. The Gospel of Jesus Christ according to prophecy, promise, and fact, is the only means of enthroning God's law in the sinner's heart ; and the grand characteristic of Gospel times, is the putting of the laws into the mind, and writing them in the heart. Whatever the Law forbids, that the Apostle declares the spirit of the Gospel also forbids, and what the Law cannot do, the Gospel can do, in showing a man how to obey, and in putting within him the only efficient principle of obedience, which is love.

But we have to do this evening, my friends, in the words of the text, with "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." May the Divine Spirit help us rightly to understand and appreciate them. We have been spared through God's good providence to enter upon another year. Its influence upon us, whatever it may bring, and our history throughout its course, will mainly depend upon our apprehension and treatment of this Gospel. The words suggest to us for consideration,—the *import*, the *character*, and the *design* of the Gospel.

I. THE IMPORT OF THE GOSPEL AS HERE CONVEYED.—You are all, doubtless, aware that the meaning of the word Gospel is glad tidings, or good-news. "Behold," said the

angel in announcing to the shepherds in the fields at Bethlehem the advent of the Saviour, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people." And the preaching of the Gospel is the proclamation of these good tidings. The news of the Saviour's advent to our sinful world was joyous tidings, and the Gospel is really intelligence about Him as the Son of God and the Redeemer of men. The Gospel, therefore, may be regarded as the burden of the Scriptures, for from beginning to end, by prefiguration, or prophecy, or history, they are full of Christ, and testify of Him. The Word of God in its different parts contains one mighty moral drama, if we may so speak, stretching from the song of the morning stars at creation, onward to the trumpet blast of the judgment day, and Jesus Christ is the master-spirit of the whole. The Gospel tells us of the grace and love of the Father, of the condescension and sacrifice of the Son, and of the mission and influence of the Holy Ghost. It tells us of a law as perfect and pure as the character of God, of a holiness that cannot look upon sin, and of a mercy too great to endure that any woe should continue to exist for which Divine wisdom could find, and Divine righteousness permit a remedy. It tells us of a love that brought the living Author of moral law, down to the region where it had been violated, that He might take upon Him the nature in which it had been transgressed, and die, the just for the unjust, that the transgressor might be brought unto God. It tells us that He,

"Strong Son of God, immortal Love,"

came thus into the world to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows, to show us what God the Father is, and to make a way for the return of his fallen children to his confidence and love. "God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is good news for all men, and this is the Gospel.

Let us illustrate this a little more fully. We all like to hear glad tidings. The recent intelligence of the relief of Lucknow, and the salvation of our country-women and children, sent a thrill of joy and gratitude throughout the country,—it was good news. But no tidings ever proclaimed to men can equal in sublimity, and joyousness, and importance, the good news of the Gospel. Man may be regarded in all the aspects of his being and character, and this Gospel is found to be good news to him in them all.

1. The Gospel is good tidings to man as a *rational and intelligent being*. The possession of a thinking soul is the distinction and glory of man, and knowledge is necessary for the welfare of his soul. The desire of knowledge, under various modifications, is one of the natural desires of the human heart. In every age, men have sought for information, and indulged in speculation regarding their origin, their nature, and their destiny. In every age, and most in those ages when mind reached the highest culture, have men asked, Whence are we? What are we? Whither are we going? The burden of ancient philosophy was in connexion with such themes as these, but it was very little that human reason or research could accomplish. The light of nature was feeble, and when followed, afforded no certainty or satisfaction. To man, then, searching after knowledge and craving for information, the Gospel is indeed good news. It reveals to us the being and character of that infinite Father to whom we owe our existence and our powers. "Man by searching could not find out God," but the Gospel makes Him known in the majesty of His dominion, and the perfection of his nature, declaring to us his creating power, His providential goodness, and his redeeming grace, and bringing before us all that we need to know here about the Almighty Ruler, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." So also does the Gospel throw heaven's light upon ourselves, upon our own position, and character, and prospects, telling us not only where we are, but what we are, what we ought to be, and what we may become. Nowhere is there such a treasury of the highest knowledge for man as in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On the loftiest and most important themes, it yields the surest information—the only information which can fill and satisfy the human soul; throwing the purest light on the pilgrimage of man; unfolding his dignity, his duty, and his danger; dispelling doubts, dissipating darkness, and offering certainty on questions about which men have perplexed themselves in vain. Nowhere else but there do we learn, in all its majesty and attractiveness, the Fatherhood of God, and, in all its momentousness and responsibility, the filial relationship of man. Truly, then, the Gospel is glad tidings to a being capable of knowledge, and craving for it.

2. Further, the Gospel is good news to man as a *moral and sinful being*.—Man

is a moral being, and everywhere gives evidence of the possession of a moral nature. In all countries, amongst all peoples, there are moral judgments, distinctions between right and wrong, or between what is believed to be right and wrong. The function of conscience is universal. This is, perhaps, the most important aspect of man's nature, and that which specially removes him far above all the lower creation—that he can distinguish between good and evil. Nor is this all. How comes it that every where man has more or less the consciousness of evil, the feeling of guilt and shortcoming, and of moral distance from the Deity? Infidelity tells us it is not so; says that this is an idle, superstitious dream, but the universal struggling and heaving of the heart of humanity tells us that infidelity is a lie. Look where you will, in the regions where the untutored savage roams, or the lands where a literary and partially civilized paganism reigns, and how is it that every where men act as if they were guilty, and seek to propitiate their gods? By the smoke of hecatombs, by the offering of sacrifices, by personal mortifications, cruel ceremonies, and long pilgrimages, men manifest the notion that their deity is their foe and must be propitiated. Thus they seek his favour. There is scarcely a glen or a copse that has not been sprinkled with the blood of sacrifice—scarcely a mountain or a valley that has not echoed the cry of the bleeding victim offered to avert the wrath of the gods that have been worshipped. Ay, and far away from the regions of paganism, here, in the sanctuary of many a heart now before me, does not the very thought of God produce unhappiness? and does not the prospect of death and judgment excite terror? and does not conscience speak of a moral condition that is not at peace with God? It is a sad and solemn truth that man is a sinner, and that he is guilty. But the Gospel brings good news to him. It tells him of a Divine provision by which he may be pardoned and saved. It tells him of a sacrifice which has been offered for sin—a sacrifice of boundless value, which has met all the requirements of righteousness, and laid the foundation for mercy. Christ, the Son of God, came into the world and died, the just for the unjust,—died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. Thus the character of the Father is honoured. His government in the universe is upheld, and the sinner may be free. Do not suppose, however, that the Son changed the Father's mind, and placated or appeased an angry God. It was the Father, loving the world, who sent his Son to make this way for his righteousness and mercy, for mercy without righteousness would be no mercy. No need, then, for pilgrimages, or mortifications, or bleeding victims now; they are vain, and worthless, and wrong. The one sacrifice of Christ has been offered and accepted; and on the ground of it alone man may be forgiven and saved. How glorious the news for a guilty soul!

And this is not all. Man, as a sinner, is not only guilty, but polluted, more or less under the power of sin. How shall he be purified from this pollution, and rescued from this dominion? The same Gospel that tells him of pardon, tells him also of purity. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." It breaks the power of iniquity in the soul; shows that, by the influence of the Holy Ghost applying it to the heart, darkness and evil are dethroned, and man is restored to the image of his Maker and his God. Thus it preaches free pardon, and promises a perfect purity to those who have rebelled against Jehovah, and broken his law. What better news could be had or heard in a sinful world than this? Verily, the Gospel is glad tidings of great joy to man. And further:—

3. It is good news to man as a *social and a suffering being*.—Man's life here is, more or less, in company with others, a pilgrimage of sorrow. He is born to trouble. You do not need any one to illustrate this to you, my friends. In your hearts and in your homes you have often the practical experience of it. You know what it is to toil and weep; you know what it is to sorrow and to suffer; you know what it is to bear affliction, and to struggle with difficulty and endure trial. And perhaps sometimes you are perplexed, and strange thoughts come into your mind; so that you call the proud happy, and the wealthy blessed, and wonder what kind of a Being it is that governs the world with such apparent inequality. There, at one time, is war with its blood-thirstiness destroying its myriads; here, at another time, is famine,

"————— that meagre fiend
Blasts mildew from between his shrivelled lips,"

and desolates the fairest regions; here, at another time, is pestilence, walking at night and at noonday, and causing multitudes to fall before it. Is this world left to chance, or left to be the sport of fiends? The Gospel comes to our relief, and tells us that an

Almighty Father governs all, that he numbers the very hairs of our heads, and that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without his permission. It tells us, that now we are in state of probation and discipline for a coming future, and provides the richest consolation, with the assurance that God is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind. Now, amidst all the mysteries of Providence, so many of which are too deep for us, when you are borne down perhaps by affliction, and fighting with difficulty, and struggling to provide things honest in the sight of all men, is it not good news to be told that a Father's eye is upon you, and that a Saviour's sympathy is with you, and that the blessed Spirit's help may be enjoyed by you? And is it not good news to be assured that whatever may be your trials and sorrows now, they are but part of that Father's discipline, intended to prepare you for a home in a region beyond the reach of affliction and sorrow for ever; so that the very tears and toils of your life may be turned into means of holy and eternal triumph. It is the Gospel only that tells us this, so that we may truly say it is good news. And once more:—

4. The Gospel is glad tidings to man as a *dying and immortal being*.—Dying, and yet immortal. Yes, both. We know that we must die, although the tendency is to forget it, so that—

“All men think all men mortal but themselves.”

We stand on the threshold of another year; the past is gone, and we are carried down the deepening stream of time towards eternity. We stand upon the dust of ages. Every where there are around us the tokens of death, and the emblems of mourning. We must die, and we know not when we may be summoned into an unseen world. Many of our friends and acquaintances, who began last year with us in health and vigour, have left us, and their bodies have been laid in the narrow house appointed for all living. What is to become of us? The soul shrinks from the thought of annihilation. Is there any shore to the ocean of futurity? Is there any morning to break upon the long night of death? Who can tell? Not human reason, nor human philosophy. Many a time have they lighted their tapers to look into the tomb, but its noxious vapours have extinguished them. Man may speculate, and hope, and long, but he cannot of himself reach certainty. Socrates, the prince of heathen philosophers, when about to take the cup of poison, said to his friends, as he took his farewell of them, “I go to die, you go to live; which is best the gods only know!” But certainty comes to us through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It brings life and immortality to light, and tells us that the Saviour has abolished death and opened the kingdom to all believers. It tells us that he vanquished death in his own domain, rose from the grave, and planted the standard of hope on the very citadel of our foe, and that as he overcame so may we. It dispels darkness from our horizon, throws the light of heaven upon our earthly pilgrimage, and beckons us to life and glory beyond the grave; thus assuring us of resurrection and immortality. Is not this glorious news, in a world where all men die, and where we do not know how soon we may individually receive the summons to depart? It is the Gospel only,—not philosophy, not reason, not infidelity, not atheism,—but the Gospel of Christ alone that can teach us to say and sing, “O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?”

Such, my friends, is the Gospel. Look at it in relation to yourselves, in relation to every aspect of your condition, and you will find that for the present life, as well as for

that which is to come, no news like it has ever been proclaimed to men. It is indeed glad tidings of great joy—"the glorious Gospel of the blessed God."

But we have to consider,—

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL AS HERE GIVEN.—It is glorious—"the glorious Gospel." Few descriptive terms are more commonly used, and yet, perhaps, none more difficult of exact definition than "glorious." There are many kinds of glory recognized and spoken of in the world, and many things called glorious. There is regal glory, military glory, political glory, intellectual glory. We speak of a glorious day, a glorious scene, a glorious achievement, a glorious victory. It is expressive of lustre, excellence, and beauty. Glory belongs to God; and that which belongs to Him, or comes from Him is alone truly glorious. Nowhere has the word so fitting and true an application as in reference to the Gospel of God. It is the expression to us of the supremacy, greatness, moral excellence, and perfection of the Almighty Father, and is especially glorious in two respects:—as a Revelation, and as a Remedy.

1. The Gospel is glorious as a *Revelation*.—It makes known to us, as we have already seen, what we nowhere else can learn—the loftiest truths connected with the character of God, and with our relationship to Him. It is the highest revelation of God, and of his law, of his government, and grace. It throws the pure and certain light of heaven upon our path, meeting us with truth that bears authoritatively upon our daily duty, as well as on our everlasting destiny. If we would know God as our God, not only as the Almighty Architect of the universe, but as our Divine Father, and gracious Friend, we must see Him in the Gospel of his Son. Nature speaks of Him, and providence speaks of Him, but it is the Gospel only that fully unfolds his moral character, and reveals his grace. There, too, we see,—as nowhere else can be seen,—the value of man's soul, the terrible evil of sin, the majesty of moral law, and the glory that may yet be ours. By the revelation of such momentous truths, the Gospel may well be designated "glorious."

But it is not only in the truths revealed, but in the *manner* or *mode* of the revelation, that the Gospel is especially glorious. "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." It is not a mere proclamation from heaven, nor a Divine theory, nor a set of holy doctrines, but a revelation of facts—facts the most wonderful and glorious in the world's history. It is this especially that constitutes the distinction and grandeur of the Gospel: "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Even the history of the gradual development of God's purposes before the advent of Christ, was a history of facts in connexion with that remarkable people the Jews, and the revelation of the deepest spiritual truths to them was by a system of acted symbols and significant rites. But the full and final revelation is in Jesus Christ, in what He was, and in what He did. In his life and ministry, in his death and resurrection, we have facts which at once show us the Father, and come home to the bosom and business of every one of us—facts that can never be modified or successfully denied—facts that are as impregnable, and strong, and blessed now, as when they first occurred. Our world has borne the footsteps of God's own Son. He came down to us in our

wretchedness and woe, to help and save us—to show us that God loved us, and thereby to make us love Him. Often, perhaps, have some of you read the history of Jesus of Nazareth, and it is ever fresh and beautiful as you return to it. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” He wandered a homeless outcast throughout the Holy Land, ever speaking words of wisdom, and doing good—ever pointing men, through all their sin and sorrow, to the loving Father. On every action of his life, on every part of his history, on every aspect of his character, we can see, brightly inscribed, “Emmanuel, God with us.” And although they hated Him without a cause, although they condemned and crucified Him, yet on the very cross his sufferings and prayers were for his cruel and guilty murderers. He died, the just for the unjust; but death could not hold Him, for He was the Prince of life, and He burst the gates of the grave, leading captive captivity. As He taught truth and worked miracles, as He wept in tenderness and pity, and as He went about to bless with authority and love, we see in Him the perfection of human sympathy and the infinitude of Divine love, the tears of a man and the majesty of God, a revelation of what the Divine Father is, and a pattern of what we, his children, should seek to be. The revelation of our hope, of our nature and our destiny, of our sinfulness, and our salvation, is bound up in the person of Jesus Christ, and in his victory over sin, and death, and hell. It is thus the *personal* element in the Gospel that most fully shows its transcendent glory,—the fact that its principles, provisions, and promises are connected with an over-living One, the guardian of humanity and the friend of sinners. To rest on his love, my brethren, to trust his righteousness, to look up into his radiant countenance, is to see the glory of the Gospel. Further,—

2. The Gospel is glorious as a *remedy*. It is a remedy, perfect and sufficient for human care and crime, for sin, and wretchedness, and death. We have seen that something is wrong with humanity; for there is every where the consciousness of evil and guilt. The Gospel of God meets that which is wrong and sets it right. It is a perfect remedy, never failing wherever it is fairly tried. Jesus came as the physician of souls, to heal the morally diseased; came to seek and to save the lost. It is an all-sufficient remedy, for it meets successfully all stages of the disease of sin; it is adapted to all classes and all characters, and, by Divine grace it works a complete renewal in the hearts of all who cordially receive it. In its universality, its adaptation, and its efficacy, we see its glory. It meets man's guilt with a justifying righteousness; it meets man's hostility with the display of infinite love; it meets man's selfishness with the power of self-sacrificing mercy; it meets man's pollution by the presence of spotless purity. “This man receiveth sinners.” Oh! brethren, these words are graciously true now as when they were first spoken of Christ in scorn. The Gospel as a remedy never faileth, and, as man, has nothing to give for it, it is without money and without price. Whosoever will may receive its good news, and be gladdened by it. It met the case of Paul, an educated man, but a cruel persecutor; it met the case of the trembling gaoler at Philippi, who was about to destroy himself; it met the case of the thief dying upon the cross, after a life of robbery and wrong; it met the case of Mary Magdalene, out of whom our Lord cast seven devils; and it can meet any and every case. I would to God, my friends, you all tried it, and proved its efficacy for yourselves. Some of you doubtless have tried it, and found that, as a remedy, it is indeed the glorious Gospel, and

the power of God. There is that man who was a hard, unfeeling miser, grinding the faces of the poor, and living only for himself and this world. The Gospel arrested him, softened his stubborn nature, and now, for the sake of Jesus who redeemed him, he abounds in labours of love. There is that man on whom the sun of prosperity shone, so that he succeeded in business and amassed a fortune; but at one fell swoop his fortune passed away, affliction and death visited his home, and now he tells you that the loss of his worldly wealth was the greatest blessing of his life, for it led him to seek and find the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ. There is that hard-working man, who, a few years ago, was a wretched drunkard, with a remorseful heart and a miserable home; in an hour of sobriety he came under the "joyful sound" of the Gospel, the truth fixed itself upon his conscience by the power of the Holy Spirit, and through Divine grace he became a new man, restored to industry and to comfort. There is that young female who wandered in the paths of vice, an outcast from her family and her home. The city missionary, perhaps, met her in the discharge of his sacred duty, and spoke to her of a loving Father, and a suffering Saviour. She trembled, she wept, she doubted; at length, by the Spirit's power she believed, and now, through the Gospel of God, she is restored to virtue and to society. Many such cases have we known. That Gospel is, indeed, a glorious remedy for all, good news to the thoughtless, the outcast, the prodigal, the penitent. It contains within itself the test of its truth, its adaptation, and its power. Accept it, then, I beseech you, and try it for yourselves; no one ever tried it in vain. And that you may be encouraged to do so, consider,—

III. THE DESIGN OF THE GOSPEL AS HERE INFERRED.—"It is the glorious Gospel of the BLESSED GOD." The word that is rendered *blessed* might perhaps be more familiarly rendered *happy*, for that is its meaning. The good news about Jesus, as the Saviour and the Friend of sinners, is from the blessed, the happy God. God is infinitely happy; nothing can disturb his serenity, or interfere with his enjoyment, or hinder his pleasure. But happiness is eminently diffusive. A cheerful, happy man will soon make his presence felt in any company; if we may so say, he cannot help it; his influence will be from the outgoing of his own nature. Thus the Gospel is to us the expression of God's blessedness, and his provision for the happiness of his sinful creatures. We learn, then, that its design in reference to men is to make them happy—truly, eternally happy. Oh! that they would believe this and turn to the Gospel of God, as to the fountain and the means of solid, durable enjoyment. Happiness is the pursuit of human life; in a thousand ways men seek after it, and only follow a phantom which will elude their grasp, and lead them to despair. Wealth has its charms and pleasure has its charms; power has its splendid allurements, and science has its manifold attractions; but true happiness is not in them. The laugh of revelry may be loud at this festive season of the year, and the shouts of godless mirth may be boisterous, but true happiness is not there. You have seen a little boy blowing soap bubbles in the air; as one of them leaves the bowl of the tobacco pipe and floats in the gentle air it seems very beautiful. It dazzles and dances in the sunbeam, with its variegated colours, a thing of joy. You see reflected in it the trees, and flowers, and buildings around you. The child is delighted with it; he puts out his hand to grasp it, as if it were a substantial toy, and when he looks there is—nothing! as delusive is the happiness which multitudes

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

vainly seek. Happiness, true, abiding happiness, can only be found in "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God."

Would you then be happy, my friends—happy in your souls, and in your homes, in your daily toil and duty—happy even when you have to pass through the scenes of sorrow, and when the shades of death fall upon you? Accept the good news of the Gospel. No intelligence can affect you, except as it is believed. The best earthly tidings will neither sadden nor elevate you, if you do not credit them. So every man must receive God's message, and believe the Gospel for himself, if he would feel its preciousness, and realize its power. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Yes, it is worthy of all acceptance; then accept it that you may be happy. It will make you free, holy, and hopeful, removing the burden of the past, the gloom of the present, and the fear of the future. A man cannot be truly happy who is in any sense a slave, who is unholy, and who is without hope for the coming future. The Gospel will lead you to happiness, by giving you the liberty of God's children, by making you pure in heart, and by pointing you to glory, honour, and immortality. Thus only can you be happy. This is the season for good wishes. Hand grasps hand; eye meets eye with glistening joy; heart beats with heart in sympathetic affection; and many a time during the last two days have you heard and spoken the words, "A happy new year!" A happy new year! how much is involved in that! Most earnestly, in all good senses, do I wish this for you; but its chief happiness to you must depend upon yourselves—upon your religious faith and decision. Listen to the message of love—hear the invitation of mercy—believe the glorious Gospel of God, and whatever the year may bring of toil or trouble, it will be a happy year to you—the happiest that you have lived. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound." Then, if you are spared to live to the close of the year, or if you die before its months have passed away, in either case "the end will be better than the beginning." You need a friend, one who will be with you always by night and by day, on Sunday and on Saturday, in joy and in sorrow—one on whom you can ever depend—one who will never forsake you—one to whom you can at all times go. The Gospel tells you of such a Friend—the Son of God and the Saviour of men, whose sympathy, and presence, and power may be always with you, and on your side. Come to Him and trust Him, and He will make you happy indeed,—happy for ever!

THE SUBLIME IMPORTANCE OF THE GREAT THEMES OF CHRISTIANITY.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 7TH, 1858,

BY THE REV. FREDERICK STEPHENS,

IN ST. JAMES'S CHAPEL, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." —1 Peter, i. 10—12.

THERE are few passages of Scripture which contain a more comprehensive view of the great themes of Christianity than this. The Apostle's eye seems to range over the whole system. He observes its most essential elements; he marks its grandest features; he apprehends its loftiest ideas; he is familiar with its facts, its associations, its aims; and combining all these, he presents them to us in this one magnificent and inspiring utterance. In the verse immediately preceding our text he has spoken of the "salvation" of the soul which is the end and issue of faith in Christ; and this "salvation" being the leading topic of the Gospel and its express purpose and design, the Apostle proceeds to indicate some of the multitudinous relations and connexions in which it stands, and to suggest certain facts and considerations which illustrate its sublime importance. He speaks of it as a manifestation of "grace"—"grace which is brought unto" mankind—the free outgoing and expression of the Divine compassion and love, thus harmonising with those words of Paul, "the grace of God which bringeth salvation unto all men hath appeared." And these two words "grace," and "salvation," go together throughout the New Testament. They accurately represent the Gospel as a whole; one represents its origin and general character; the other its design and issue; "grace" the fountain, "salvation" the stream which flows from it. Connected with these topics, and standing out prominently before the Apostle's mind are two others, namely, "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." The former represents the very foundation of Christianity—the facts upon which it is built; the latter represents the grand succession of events and issues which have flowed out, and which must continue to flow out from the former through all time and through all eternity. "The sufferings of Christ" include the entire course of his humiliation, from his assumption of our humanity in one of its lowliest forms, through all his temptation and trial, his persecution and sorrow, until the closing hour of his agony, when, amidst the darkened heavens, and the reeling earth, and the opening graves, he cried out "It is finished," and gave up the ghost. "The glory that should follow" includes the whole course of his subsequent triumph and exaltation, his Mediatorial splendour and sway. It includes his resurrection from the dead by the working of the mighty power of the Father; his ascension into heaven amidst the jubilant shout of angels; his session at the right hand of God in a glorified human form, the object of wonder and adoration to the heavenly hosts; his Headship over all things to the Church; his Lordship over our race; his appointment as the Judge of all the earth. "The glory that should follow" includes the spiritual results which should be attained amongst men through the mission and death of Christ—the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal fulness, and his perpetual presence and agency in the Church and in the world; the diffusion of the Gospel throughout

the nations, until light, and liberty, and peace, and salvation should visit every land—the redemption of humanity from the spiritual tyrannies which oppress it, the establishment of harmony and holiness everywhere, the restoration of men to Divine communion, and their immortal blessedness in the presence of God and of the Lamb. “The glory that should follow” includes the honour which redounds to God from the successful completion of Christ’s undertaking, from the overthrow of the kingdom of darkness, from the obedience and worship of sanctified men on earth, from the lofty thankgivings of the redeemed in heaven, and the ceaseless adoration which is rendered by the celestial hierarchies who delight to contemplate the sublime mysteries of redemption. That “the glory which should follow” includes all this is easily gathered from successive sayings of our Lord—“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory.” “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Now is the son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.”

These are the great, central themes of Christianity, and they are the grandest topics of human thought. Before them all others are transient in interest, and small in importance. The transactions of history, the subtilities of science, or the fascinating mysteries of philosophy are not to be compared with these. And one object of the Apostle Peter, in the passage under consideration as well as in the whole chapter, seems to have been to exhibit and illustrate the surpassing greatness of these Christian themes. And, adopting the course of thought which the Apostle indicates, this shall be the object of this morning’s discourse. Our text suggests to us that the leading topics of Christianity have been the subject of *prophetic intimation and enquiry*; of *Apostolic announcement*; of *Divine attestation*; and of *Angelic study*. To these several illustrations of their importance I shall direct your attention. The great Christian themes were the subject—

I. *Of Prophetic Intimation and Inquiry.* The arrangements which were made by the wisdom and mercy of God, for the recovery and salvation of the human race were co-eval with the fall. All the circumstances and issues of that sad event were present to the mind of God prior to the creation of man, and in anticipation of it, the great plan of Redemption was devised; so that when the dread catastrophe took place, in his infinite compassion and love, he at once brought the plan into operation, turned aside the bitterness of death from the first transgressors, awakened hope in their desponding hearts, and made his wondrous grace the foundation on which his moral government should rest, and the basis of his various dispensations and acts towards men in all succeeding ages. The wisdom of God did not, however, see fit to exhibit the redeeming plan fully, immediately after the fall. For a long course of ages it was but partially divulged. It remained in the unfathomed and unfathomable depths of the Divine Omniscience. Men lived under its operation, and received its benefits, but still its nature and working were not disclosed to them. It was a Divine secret, which humanity could not discover. Then the language of the Apostle Paul was strikingly descriptive of it—it was “the mystery which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God;” “in other ages it was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit.”

The plan of God, in reference to the disclosure of his purposes of grace to mankind, was in perfect harmony with the general order of his proceedings. God moves to the accomplishment of his designs gradually. He acts on system. No violent disruptions are seen suddenly breaking forth as if to meet an un contemplated emergency. In every department of the Divine operations may be observed law, order, the regular succession of events. A long series of preparations often precedes the Divine act. And whether in the production of a blade of grass, a creation of the world, or the redemption of a race, progress is the law of the Divine proceedings. The revelation of the saving plan of God partook of this progressive character. Age after age God raised up a succession of holy men, to whom he communicated, by slow degrees, the fur-

pose of His Will ; and whom he employed to make known these communications to the men of their own generation, and to record them in various modes for the benefit and guidance of posterity." "God spake at sundry times and in divers manners unto the fathers by the prophets." They "prophesied of the grace that should come" unto humanity in the fulness of time, and they "testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." One after another they appeared, each contributing to the general treasury of truth the portion with which he had been entrusted ; reviving the failing expectation and the flagging hope of men in the dimness of bygone ages. The early patriarchs, the hoary fathers of our race preserved for their descendants the few imperfect intimations which were given to themselves. Then came, in their order, the various members of "the goodly fellowship of the prophets." Moses proclaiming the advent of a Prophet like himself ; David predicting a Monarch and a Conqueror, and pouring forth the enchanting strains of his harp to celebrate his greatness ; Isaiah fortelling his humiliation and sacrifice, and representing with his gorgeous imagery the scenes that should follow, and the sublime history of the Church ; Jeremiah uttering his plaintive cry over the sin of Israel, and speaking of One who should come, and who should be called "The Lord our Righteousness ; Ezekiel, with his dazzling splendour and the fiery glow of his inspiration ; Daniel calculating the period of Messiah's appearance, and pointing out those grand occurrences in human history, which seem like the halting-places of Jehovah as he marches onward to the accomplishment of his will. And the minor prophets, one telling of the birth-place of Christ ; another speaking of him as the smitten Shepherd ; another predicting that brief hour of enthusiasm when the multitude gathered round him as he entered Jerusalem for the last time, and shouted their welcome, "Hosanna, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the Highest ;" and another, the last of that "goodly fellowship" closing up, not only his own prophecies, but the whole series of Old Testament predictions, by declaring the coming of Messiah's herald ; and, then, leaving the deep hush of expectation to settle down for centuries upon humanity at large, until it should be broken by the voice ringing through the solitudes of Judea, startling the entire population, and proclaiming, "I am not the Christ, I am sent before him. He standeth in the midst of you." And when the whole series of ancient prophecy was complete, it constituted a mass of testimony to which appeal might be successfully made in the opening of the Christian economy, and men could say, when they became acquainted with Jesus of Nazareth, as Philip said to Nathaniel, "We have found him of whom Moses, in the law and the prophets, did write ;" and they could say, when the facts of his history were told them, and the purposes of his mission were disclosed, as he himself said to his disciples, just before his departure from them : "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day ; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

But notwithstanding the fulness of Old Testament prophecy, concerning the Gospel, and the clearness (to our minds) of many individual predictions, yet the prophets themselves did not fully comprehend them. The grand design of prophecy when given, and so long as it remains unfulfilled, seems to be to excite and sustain expectation and hope. It is only in the light of history that the meaning of prophecy can be accurately seen. There was therefore necessarily much darkness resting upon the minds of the prophets, as to the signification of their own predictions. "Many prophets and kings," said our Lord to the men of his own day, "Many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye see and have not seen them, and to hear the things which ye hear and have not heard them." Faint outlines of the future shaped themselves before their minds, symbolic visions of the future rose up before them, strange and mystic dreams visited them in the stillness of the night, the shadows of coming events flitted across their path, and some general impression and idea of the future were formed within them ; but they could not see with that clearness which would satisfy the eager desire of their souls to understand the mind and the purposes of God. With great earnest-

ness and devout meditation they enquired into the significance and import of their predictions, comparing prophecy with prophecy, noting the signs of the times which were passing over them, marking the illustration and interpretation of the Divine purposes which history and providence and religious institutions afforded, and from whatever sources of light and knowledge were open to them obtaining enlightenment and information. Still they could be but partially successful, and they had to rest satisfied with the assurance that they were preparing the way for the future; that they were the heralds and harbingers of glorious things to come, and that they were ministering to the spiritual welfare of generations unborn. Noble and faithful men! they uttered forth the messages with which they were charged from heaven, and while they felt that they could not themselves penetrate to the heart of the mysteries which they preached, and that they would not see the glorious realities which they predicted, while they knew that the dim shadows must linger around them so long as they lived, yet they rejoiced in the prospect which lay before humanity, and felt themselves unspeakably honoured in being ministers of preparation for the auspicious future; and the inspiring doxology with which the royal bard and prophet closed his prophecies, might have been appropriately sung by each of the prophetic choir as he closed his mission. "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory." The great themes of Christianity were the subject—

II. *Of Apostolic Announcement.* The intimations which were given concerning the facts and purposes of Christianity before the coming of Christ, were (as has been already observed), intended to keep alive the expectation and hopes of mankind. The prophetic ministry was a ministry of preparation. Then, "when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son."—"The desire of all nations" appeared, and the clearly-expressed prophecies of the Old Testament and of the Jewish people, and the vague foreshadowings which were scattered throughout the Gentile world, received their full accomplishment. "The Only Begotten of the Father" tabernacled amongst men, shewing forth the glory of the Father, faithfully executing the Father's will, patiently undergoing the sufferings which were predicted, and achieving the grand undertaking and triumph which the prophets foretold. Then the prophetic ministry passed away. These morning-stars of redemption faded before the rising of "the Sun of Righteousness." A new order of agencies was instituted in relation to the development and completion of the Divine plan. The ministry of preparation was succeeded by the ministry of publication and accomplishment. Preaching superseded prophecy. Apostles and Evangelists were called forth and commissioned to proclaim the same facts and truths which had been the themes of prophetic song; and the harmony subsisting between the old ministry and the new was emphatically declared by St. Paul when he stood before King Agrippa and said, "Having obtained help of God I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which Moses and the Prophets did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and that he should shew light unto the people and to the Gentiles." The old ministry spoke of the future, the new ministry spoke of the past.

Preparations for this new ministry were made by our Lord himself. He chose witnesses who should accompany him during his active course, who should observe the facts of his life, who should be intimately acquainted with his whole career and with all his movements, who should be taught the elementary truths of the new era from his own lips, who should become attached to his person and his cause, and thereby be qualified for the mission which lay before them. These men accompanied him while he was upon the earth. They saw his miracles. They heard his discourses. They were acquainted with the facts of his life and death. They were witnesses of his resurrection, and they stood gazing up after him into heaven, when he rose from the Mount of Olives and ascended, as in a chariot of triumph, to the throne of his Mediatorship. Shortly before he ascended he said unto them,

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Acting on this, the parting charge of Christ, the anointed ministers of the Word soon after entered upon their glorious mission. "Beginning at Jerusalem," according to the instructions of their Master, they made it the grand sphere of their labours, until persecution arose and scattered them abroad. Then new fields were continually opening. New centres of evangelic influence and power were continually being formed; until, at length, the whole world rang with the tidings of salvation, until the nations stood up in amazement at the deserted temples and the falling idolatries which surrounded them, and a moral revolution swept over humanity such as the world had never seen.

Throughout this evangelic enterprise, but one system was pursued by those who were employed in it—that system was the distinct announcement of the great Christian themes, the most marked and prominent of which are indicated in our text, "Grace and Salvation"—"the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow;" not that these are the sole topics which Christianity contains and which the Apostles preached; far from it, but that they are its central themes, the solid, massive, primitive formations on which all other parts of the system rest. The mission of Apostles and Evangelists was specially ordained to "report" these things unto men; to publish to the ends of the earth the tidings of God's "grace" towards men, to make known that great cardinal truth of revelation that "God is Love;" to make known "the sufferings of Christ" as the demonstration of the righteousness and the love of God; to proclaim a full and free salvation to our guilty and perishing race, and to disclose to the eyes of men the sublime issues of the Gospel, in "the glory that should follow." And if you track their course amongst the nations, you find them fulfilling their mission. If you stand with Peter in Jerusalem, when he opens the new dispensation to the Jews, as he comes forth fresh from the Spirit's baptism on that glorious Pentecostal morning; or if you accompany him to the house of Cornelius the Centurion, where he opens the new dispensation to the Gentiles, after witnessing the marvellous vision of the sheet; if you go with Philip to Samaria, and listen to that preaching which filled the city with joy, or if you accompany him on his way toward Gaza, to meet the Ethiopian; if you enter the Jewish synagogue at Ephesus, and listen to the commanding eloquence of Apollos; or, if you follow in the footsteps of Paul, and attend to the utterances of his manly intellect, and his fervent spirit, whatever diversity you may perceive in the style of their address, or in the cast and clothing of their thoughts, you will find that the topics of their speech are the same. We may take the statements of Paul, in reference to his own ministry, as a faithful portraiture of that of his brethren:—"I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you—how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." And we may take the teaching of Paul as a clear illustration and example of that of his fellow-workers in the faith, and we find that the topics referred to were ever prominent. Not, we repeat, that these were the sole topics of the Apostolic ministry. No; the Christianity of Paul was a broad and expansive thing. It was not a narrow, soul-cramping system like the theologies and creeds of men. It was wide and comprehensive in its sweep. It was a very universe of truth in which the mighty soul of the Apostle could expatiate, and to the utmost verge and boundary of which even an angel's pinion would not have strength to bear him. The ministry of the whole company of Apostles and Evangelists was characterised by breadth and fulness. Starting from the facts of the Gospel history, and the primary ideas of grace and salvation they expounded, but they could not exhaust the great Christian themes. And wherever they went, they felt that they were called to be witnesses for Christ, and preachers of the truth. The great Christian themes were the subject—

III. *Of Divine Attestation.* Throughout the history of the world, and under every dispensation of his mercy which God has vouchsafed to men, the presence of the Holy Ghost has been with them, and his influence and power have been at work. One of the principal manifestations of his presence and agency has been the communication of the successive portions of Divine truth to the world. "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The anointing and influence of the Divine Spirit were essential to the true prophets in ancient times. From him proceeded the light which filled their souls. He gave them that power of vision which enabled them to penetrate the shadows of the future; he raised them to the lofty elevation from which they could survey the scenery and transactions of coming ages; he touched their lips with the hallowed fire; he imparted power to the rod of Moses; he breathed melody into the soul of David; he gave Isaiah his eagle-eye; he rapt Ezekiel in the fierce frenzy of inspiration. Whatever anticipations and foresight or foreknowledge which the ancient prophets possessed as to the future it came from him. It was "the Spirit of Christ which was in them," which "testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." As time passed on, and the Redeemer's advent drew nigh, the Spirit shone into the minds of the prophets, until the period arrived when the page of prophecy came to a close. But during the prophetic age, the Spirit was not given in the fulness of his power, that fulness was reserved for the coming dispensation.

When that dispensation came, and its preparatory arrangements were over, the Spirit of God was poured forth with unmeasured copiousness. The manifestations of his presence and power became more marked and signal than ever; clearer light shone into the souls of men; a more abundant revelation of the mind of God was given; the mysteries of the past were mysteries no longer; a wider diffusion of the Spirit's influence and gifts took place; men rose to a loftier spiritual elevation than had ever been attained by humanity before; tongues of fire rested upon the Apostles, and they became Divinely-qualified for the stupendous task assigned them; and the presence and fulness of the Spirit became the common heritage of the Church. A new era opened upon the world; a new life was breathed into humanity; and the overflowing riches of the Divine benevolence were poured out at the feet of mankind. "The Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" was the crowning manifestation of the love of God.

When the first preachers of the Gospel went forth, according to the commission which they received from Christ, they did so under the immediate influence of the Divine Spirit. As the Lord himself had been "anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power," so was it also with his ambassadors. They were clothed with "power from on high." The Spirit accompanied them and rested upon them, not merely to qualify them for their work, and to sustain them in its performance, but also to give forth demonstration of the divinity of their message, and the transcendent importance of the truths which they preached. And wherever they went, and amongst whatsoever people they laboured they could invariably point to the results and say "our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." The manifestation of his presence and power confirmed their testimony. The testimony of Peter at Jerusalem, the testimony of Philip at Samaria, the testimony of Paul throughout the Gentile world were thus corroborated. "God was working with them, confirming their word by signs following." The Gospel—the "great salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord was confirmed by them that heard him. God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own will." This corroborating testimony of the Spirit, this Divine attestation to the Apostolic ministry and the great Christian themes which that ministry proclaimed, was borne, not so much by the outward miracles which the Apostles wrought, as by the spiritual results which followed their labours. The grandest signs

which accompanied them were those which took place in the region of the soul. Through the word of the Apostles, mighty spiritual works were accomplished. Hearts were changed. Consciences were purified. Sins were washed away. Spiritual life and freedom were imparted to myriads. The victims of superstition and idolatry and sensuality were rescued. Character and conduct were sanctified. Peace and blessing and hope were breathed into the dark and despairing souls of men. Multitudes were "translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son;" "and were made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light." Thus was attestation borne to the preaching of the Apostles. Thus was the Divine seal affixed to their labours. They "preached the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." Their speech and their preaching were "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." O that the baptism of fire which rested upon them might rest upon the Church and ministry in our own day, and that similar signs of the presence of God and demonstrations of his power, might be made manifest in the earth! The great themes of Christianity are subjects—

IV. *Of Angelic Study.* "Which things," writes the Apostle, "the angels desire to look into." We are here introduced, my brethren, to an order of intelligences with whom we have no conscious intercourse or contact, of whom we can form very imperfect ideas, but the reality of whose existence is clearly indicated in Scripture, and whose position and occupation in the universe are somewhat disclosed. "They are the servants of God doing his will." "He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." They are occasionally employed in executing the high behests of their Sovereign in various parts of his unbounded empire. They have been employed at various times in executing the purposes of God in relation to mankind. Sometimes they have come forth from that invisibility which is their normal state of being, but, in general, their ministry has been fulfilled unseen. That the affairs of men awaken interest amongst them was clearly stated by our Lord when he said, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth;" and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, that they are all "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who are heirs of salvation." The visions of the heavenly world which are laid open to us in the Apocalypse, represent them as constituting a vast and united choir, presenting before the throne of God and the Lamb, their lofty adoration and worship, filling the gorgeous temple of the invisible world, and making it vocal with their praise. And again, they are represented as engaged in contemplating the acts and movements of Jehovah in the different departments of his rule. Thus, when the universe gradually arose into being, and shewed forth the might and skill of the Creator, and the angelic spectators witnessed the stupendous deed, "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy." The progress and history of the Church of Christ are themes of their contemplation; for "unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly place is made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God;" and our text declares them to be interested and engaged in the study of the glorious facts and truths to which the Church owes its being. Their employment in the universe of God is not active and missionary service only, nor praise and worship in the upper sanctuary only, but deep, devout, and earnest study too—"which things the angels desire to look into."

The revelation of the Divine "grace" to the world—the multiplied blessings which constitute the one great boon, "salvation"—the marvellous sacrifice and sufferings of the Son of God—the glorious results that follow, these, with the other connected themes of Christianity, possess an entrancing interest and fascination for the angels of God. We remember how some of them were employed in ministering to Christ—how a great multitude of the heavenly host accompanied the honoured messenger who was sent forth to announce to the shepherds the birth of Jesus, and with what rapture they sang "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill towards men." We remember how angels were charged to warn Joseph of the purposes of Herod and to intimate his death. We remember how they came and ministered to the Son of Man in the wilderness after his fasting and temptation, and how

they appeared in Gethsemane to comfort him after his bitter agony there. We remember how they visited his tomb on the morning of his resurrection, and said to the women, "He is not here, he is risen as he said." We remember with what exultation they welcomed him to his reward, when they passed through the azure gates of heaven shouting, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in." "The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory." And still they watch the progress of his Mediatorial interposition, and investigate the principles of his rule, and mark the working out of his grand designs. "Which things the angels desire to look into"—bending in the attitude of absorbed attention—stooping down to gaze into the depths of the mystery of redemption and to penetrate to its very heart. They bring their lofty powers to bear upon the theme. They inquire, and investigate, and reason; and as they do, grander views of God fill their capacious intellects, fresh springs of rapture are opened within them, new fountains of love, and joy, and praise are unsealed, and with ever-increasing gladness and homage they draw near to the throne of God and the Lamb, the grand gathering-place of the armies of heaven, the high altar of its gorgeous sanctuary, and sing, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

These, my brethren, are the facts and considerations which the Apostle places before us in the text as illustrative of the sublime importance of the great themes of the Gospel. And surely these considerations ought to be sufficient to produce in our minds an overwhelming conviction of that importance. Prophets foretold the leading facts of Christianity, and amidst the gloom by which they were surrounded they "searched and enquired diligently" into the significance of their predictions and eagerly desired to know the mind of the Spirit. Apostles were sent forth to proclaim the great and blessed tidings of "salvation" by the "grace" of God—of "glory" following "the sufferings of Christ." God bore testimony to their word by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. Angels contemplate these truths with intense eagerness and delight. In what way, my brethren, could the vast importance of the Gospel be more clearly demonstrated? I know not how it can be more clearly demonstrated. The noblest of the sons of earth have testified of it. The "innumerable company of angels" testify of it. God himself has borne witness to it. And yet, my brethren, how different has it been with some of us! These great topics have been preached to you for years. The free and unlimited "Grace" of God has been declared to you. "Salvation" in all its fulness has been offered to you "without money and without price." The argument of the cross has been brought to bear upon you, and you have been pointed to its wondrous sacrifice. "The glory that should follow" has been unfolded to your view, and yet, are there not some amongst you, who have turned away from all these as if they were an idle tale? Are there not some amongst you who care more for business and pleasure, and the most trifling topics of the day, than you care for these? The subject which prophets eagerly enquired after, which Apostles preached, and for which they became martyrs, which angels study, and which God sent down his Spirit to confirm are of no interest to you! So far as you are concerned, God has spoken in vain, prophets have testified in vain, Apostles have preached in vain, Christ has suffered and died in vain. Is it any wonder that you should be still unsaved? How long shall this be so, my brethren? Will you continue in your inattention and indifference and neglect, or will you rouse yourselves, at once, *this day, this hour*, and cease to alight the grace of God, and the sufferings of His Son? "If the word spoken by angels were steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" "See that you refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not, who refused him that speaks on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE GREAT REVIVAL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 28TH, 1856, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."—Isaiah lli. 10.

WHEN the heroes of old prepared for the fight they put on their armour; but when God prepares for battle he makes bare his arm. Man has to look two ways—to his own defence, as well as to the offence of his enemy; God hath but one direction in which to cast his eye—the overthrow of his foeman; and he disregards all measures of defence, and scorns all armour. He *makes bare* his arm in the sight of all the people. When men would do their work in earnest, too, they sometimes strip themselves, like that warrior of old, who, when he went to battle with the Turks, would never fight them except with the bare arm. "Such things as they," said he, "I need not fear; they have more reason to fear my bare arm than I their scimitar." Men feel that they are prepared for a work when they have cast away their cumbrous garments. And so the prophet represents the Lord as laying aside for awhile the garments of his dignity, and making bare his arm, that he may do his work in earnest, and accomplish his purpose for the establishment of his church.

Now, leaving the figure, which is a very great one, I would remind you that its meaning is fully carried out, whenever God is pleased to send a great revival of religion. My heart is glad within me this day, for I am the bearer of good tidings. My soul has been made exceedingly full of happiness, by the tidings of a great revival of religion throughout the United States. Some hundred years, or more, ago, it pleased the Lord to send one of the most marvellous religious awakenings that was ever known; the whole of the United States seemed shaken from end to end with enthusiasm for hearing the Word of God; and now, after the lapse of a century, the like has occurred again. The monetary pressure has at length departed; but it has left behind it the wreck of many mighty fortunes. Many men, who were once princes, have now become beggars, and in America, more than in England, men have learned the instability of all human things. The minds of men, thus weaned from the earth by terrible and unexpected panic, seem prepared to receive tidings from a better land, and to turn their exertions in a heavenly direction. You will be told by any one who is conversant with the present state of America, that wherever you go there are the most remarkable signs that religion is progressing with majestic strides. The great revival, as it is now called, has become the common market talk of merchants; it is the theme of every newspaper; even the secular press remark it, for it has become so astonishing that all ranks and classes of men seem to have been affected by it. Apparently without any cause whatever, fear has taken hold of the hearts of men; a thrill seems to be shot through every breast at once; and it is affirmed by men of good repute, that there are, at this time, towns in New England where you could not, even if you searched, find one solitary unconverted person. So marvellous—I had almost said, so miraculous—has been the sudden and instantaneous spread of religion throughout the great empire, that it is scarcely possible for us to believe the half of it, even though it should be told us. Now, as you are aware, I have at all times been peculiarly jealous and suspicious of revivals. Whenever I see a man

who is called a revivalist, I always set him down for a cipher. I would scorn the taking of such a title as that to myself. If God pleases to make use of a man for the promoting of a revival, well and good; but for any man to assume the title and office of a revivalist, and go about the country, believing that wherever *he* goes he is the vessel of mercy appointed to convey a revival of religion, is, I think, an assumption far too arrogant for any man who has the slightest degree of modesty. And again, there are a large number of revivals, which occur every now and then in our towns, and sometimes in our city, which I believe to be spurious and worthless. I have heard of the people crowding in the morning, the afternoon, and the evening, to hear some noted revivalist, and under his preaching some have screamed, have shrieked, have fallen down on the floor, have rolled themselves in convulsions, and afterwards, when he has set a form for penitents, employing one or two decoy ducks to run out from the rest and make a confession of sin, hundreds have come forward, impressed by that one sermon, and declared that they were, there and then, turned from the error of their ways; and it was only last week I saw a record of a certain place, in our own country, giving an account, that on such a day, under the preaching of the Rev. Mr. So-and-so, seventeen persons were thoroughly sanctified, twenty-eight were convinced of sin, and twenty-nine received the blessing of justification. Then comes the next day, so many more; the following day, so many more; and afterwards they are all cast up together, making a grand total of some hundreds, who have been blessed during three services, under the ministry of Mr. So-and-so. All that I call farce! There may be something very good in it; but the outside looks to me to be so rotten, that I should scarcely trust myself to think that the good within comes to any very great amount. When people go to work to calculate so exactly by arithmetic, it always strikes me they have mistaken what they are at. We may easily say that so many were added to the church on a certain occasion, but to take a separate census of the convinced, the justified, and the sanctified, is absurd. You will, therefore, be surprised at finding me speaking of revival; but you will, perhaps, not be quite so surprised when I endeavour to explain what I mean by an earnest and intense desire, which I feel in my heart, that God would be pleased to send throughout this country a revival like that which has just commenced in America, and which, we trust, will long continue there.

I should endeavour to mark, in the first place, *the cause of every revival of true religion*; secondly, *the consequences of such revival*; then, thirdly, I shall give a caution or two, that we make not mistakes in this matter, and conceive *that* to be God's work which is only man's; and then I shall conclude by making *an exhortation* to all my brethren in the faith of Christ, to labour and pray for a revival of religion in the midst of our churches.

I. First, then, **THE CAUSE OF A TRUE REVIVAL.** The mere worldly man does not understand a revival: he cannot make it out. Why is it, that a sudden fit of godliness, as he would call it, a kind of sacred epidemic, should seize upon a mass of people all at once? What can be the cause of it? It frequently occurs in the absence of all great evangelists; it cannot be traced to any particular means. There have been no special agencies used in order to bring it about—no machinery supplied, no societies established; and yet it has come, just like a heavenly hurricane, sweeping everything before it. It has rushed across the land, and of it men have said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth; we hear the sound thereof, but we cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." What is then, the cause? Our answer is, If a revival be true and real, it is caused by the Holy Spirit, and by him alone. When Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost, and preached that memorable sermon by which three thousand persons were converted, can we attribute the remarkable success of his ministry to anything else but the ministry of the Holy Spirit? I read the notes of Peter's discourse; it was certainly very simple; it was a plain narration of facts; it was certainly very bold, very cutting, and pointed, and personal, for he did not blush to tell them that *they* had put to death the Lord of life and glory, and were guilty of his blood; but on the mere surface of the thing, I should be apt to say that I had read many a sermon far more likely to be effective than Peter's; and I believe there have been many preachers who have lived, whose sermons when read would have been far more notable and far more regarded, at least by the critic, than the sermon of Peter. It seems to have been exceedingly simple and suitable, and extremely earnest, but none of these things are so eminently remarkable as to be the cause of such extraordinary success.

What, then, was the reason? And we reply, once more, the same word which the Holy Spirit blesses to the conversion of one, he might, if he pleased, bless to the conversion of a thousand: and I am persuaded that the meanest preacher in Christendom might come into this pulpit this morning, and preach the most simple sermon, in the most uneducated style, and the Holy Spirit, if so he willed it, might bless that sermon to the conversion of every man, woman, and child, within this place: for his arm is not shortened, his power is not straitened, and as long as he is Omnipotent, it is ours to believe that he can do whatsoever seemeth him good. Do not imagine, when you hear of a sermon being made useful, that it was the sermon itself that did the work. Conceive not, because a certain preacher may have been greatly blessed for the conversion of souls, that there is anything in the preacher. God forbid that any preacher should arrogate such a thing to himself. Any other preacher, blessed in the same manner, would be as useful, and any other sermon, provided it be truthful and earnest, might be as much blessed as that particular sermon which has become notable by reason of the multitudes who by it have been brought to Christ. The Spirit of God, when he pleaseth, blows upon the sons of men. He finds a people hard and careless; he casts a desire into their minds—he sows it broadcast in their spirits—a thought towards the house of the Lord, and straightway, they know not why, they flock in multitudes to hear the Word preached. He casts the seed, the same seed, into the preacher's mind, and he knows not how, but he feels more earnest than he did before. When he goes to his pulpit, he goes to it as to a solemn sacrifice, and there he preaches, believing that great things will be the effect of his ministry. The time of prayer cometh round; Christians are found meeting together in large numbers; they cannot tell what it is that influences them, but they feel they must go up to the house of the Lord to pray. There are earnest prayers lifted up; there are earnest sermons preached, and there are earnest hearers. Then God the Almighty One is pleased to soften hard hearts, and subdue the stout-hearted, and bring them to know the truth. The only real cause is, his Spirit working in the minds of men.

But while this is the only actual cause, yet there are instrumental causes; and the main instrumental cause of a great revival must be the bold, faithful, fearless preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus. Why, brethren, we want every now and then to have a reformation. One reformation will never serve the church; she needs continually to be wound up, and set a-going afresh; for her works run down, and she does not act as she used to do. The bold, bald doctrines that Luther brought out, began to be a little modified, until layer after layer was deposited upon them, and at last the old rocky truth was covered up, and there grew upon the superficial subsoil an abundance of green and flowery errors, that looked fair and beautiful, but were in no way whatever related to the truth, except as they were the products of its decay. Then there came bold men who brought the truth out again, and said, "Clear away this rubbish; let the blast light upon these deceitful beauties; we want them not; bring out the old truth once more!" And it came out. But the tendency of the church perpetually is, to be covering up its own naked simplicity, forgetting that the truth is never so beautiful as when it stands in its own unadorned, God-given glory. And now, at this time, we want to have the old truths restored to their places. The subtleties and the refinements of the preacher must be laid aside. We must give up the grand distinctions of the school-men, and all the lettered technicalities of men who have studied theology as a system, but have not felt the power of it in their hearts; and when the good old truth is once more preached by men whose lips are touched as with a live coal, from off the altar, this shall be the instrument, in the hand of the Spirit, for bringing about a great and thorough revival of religion in the land.

But added to this, there must be the earnest prayers of the church. All in vain the most indefatigable ministry, unless the church waters the seed sown, with her abundant tears. Every revival has been commenced and attended by a large amount of prayer. In the city of New York at the present moment, there is not, I believe, one single hour of the day, wherein Christians are not gathered together for prayer. One church opens its doors from five o'clock till six, for prayer; another church opens from six to seven, and summons its praying men to offer the sacrifice of supplication. Six o'clock is past, and men are gone to their labour. Another class find it then convenient—such as those, perhaps, who go to business at eight or nine—and from seven to eight there is another prayer meeting. From eight to nine there is another, in another part of the city, and what is most

marvellous, at high noon, from twelve to one, in the midst of the city of New York, there is held a prayer meeting in a large room, which is crammed to the doors every day, with hundreds standing outside. This prayer meeting is made up of merchants of the city, who can spare a quarter of an hour to go in and say a word of prayer, and then leave again; and then a fresh company come in to fill up the ranks, so that it is supposed that many hundreds assemble in that one place for prayer during the appointed hour. This is the explanation of the revival. If this were done in London—if we for once would outvie old Rome, who kept her monks in her sanctuaries, always at prayer, both by night and by day,—if we together could keep up one golden chain of prayer, link after link of holy brotherhood being joined together in supplication, then might we expect an abundant outpouring of the Divine Spirit from the Lord our God. The Holy Spirit, as the actual agent—the Word preached, and the prayers of the people, as the instruments—and we have thus explained the cause of a true revival of religion.

II. But now what are THE CONSEQUENCES OF A REVIVAL OF RELIGION? Why, the consequences are everything that our hearts could desire for the church's good. When the revival of religion comes into a nation, the minister begins to be warmed. It is said that in America the most sleepy preachers have begun to wake up; they have warmed themselves at the general fire, and men who could not preach without notes, and could not preach with them to any purpose at all, have found it in their hearts to speak right out, and speak with all their might to the people. When there comes a revival, the minister all of a sudden finds that the usual forms and conventionalities of the pulpit are not exactly suitable to the times. He breaks through one hedge; then he finds himself in an awkward position, and he has to break through another. He finds himself perhaps on a Sunday morning, though a Doctor of Divinity, actually telling an anecdote—lowering the dignity of the pulpit by actually using a simile or metaphor—sometimes perhaps accidentally making his people smile, and what is also a great sin in these solid theologians, now and then dropping a tear. He does not exactly know how it is, but the people catch up his words. "I must have something good for them," he says. He just burns that old lot of sermons; or he puts them under the bed, and gets some new ones, or gets none at all, but just gets his text, and begins to cry, "Men and brethren, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The old deacons say, "What is the matter with our minister?" The old ladies, who have heard him for many years, and slept in the front of the gallery so regularly, begin to rouse, and say, "I wonder what has happened to him; how can it be? Why, he preaches like a man on fire. The tear runs over at his eye; his soul is full of love for souls." They cannot make it out; they have often said he was dull and dreary and drowsy. How is it all this is changed? Why, it is the revival. The revival has touched the minister; the sun, shining so brightly, has melted some of the snow on the mountain-top, and it is running down in fertilizing streams, to bless the valleys; and the people down below are refreshed by the ministrations of the man of God who has awakened himself up from his sleep, and finds himself, like another Elijah, made strong for forty days of labour. Well, then, directly after that the revival begins to touch the people at large. The congregation was once numbered by the empty seats, rather than by the full ones. But on a sudden—the minister does not understand it—he finds the people coming to hear him. He never was popular, never hoped to be. All at once he wakes up and finds himself famous, so far as a large congregation can make him so. There are the people, and how they listen! They are all awake, all in earnest; they lean their heads forward, they put their hands to their ears. His voice is feeble; they try to help him; they are doing anything so that they may hear the Word of Life. And then the members of the church open their eyes and see the chapel full, and they say, "How has this come about? We ought to pray." A prayer-meeting is summoned. There had been five or six in the vestry: now there are five or six hundred, and they turn into the chapel. And oh! how they pray! That old stager, who used to pray for twenty minutes, finds it now convenient to confine himself to five; and that good old man, who always used to repeat the same form of prayer when he stood up, and talked about the horse that rushed into the battle, and the oil from vessel to vessel, and all that, leaves all these things at home, and just prays, "O Lord, save sinners, for Jesus Christ's sake." And there are sobs and groans heard in the prayer meetings. It is evident that not one, but all, are praying; the whole mass seems moved to supplication. How is this again? Why, it is just the effect of the

revival, for when the revival truly comes, the minister and the congregation and the church will receive good by it.

But it does not end here. The members of the church grow more solemn, more serious. Family duties are better attended to; the home circle is brought under better culture. Those who could not spare time for family prayer, find they can do so now; those who had no opportunity for teaching their children, now dare not go a day without doing it; for they hear that there are children converted in the Sunday school. There are twice as many in the Sunday school now as there used to be; and, what is wonderful, the little children meet together to pray; their little hearts are touched, and many of them show signs of a work of grace begun; and fathers and mothers think they must try what they can do for their families: if God is blessing little children, why should he not bless theirs?

And then, when you see the members of the church going up to the house of God, you mark with what a steady and sober air they go. Perhaps they talk on the way, but they talk of Jesus; and if they whisper together at the gates of the sanctuary, it is no longer idle gossip; it is no remark about, "how do you like the preacher? What did you think of him? Did you notice So-and-so?" Oh, no! "I pray the Lord that he might bless the word of his servant, that he might send an unction from on high, that the dying flame may be kindled, and that where there is life, it may be promoted and strengthened, and receive fresh vigour." This is their whole conversation.

And then comes the great result. There is an inquirers' meeting held: the good brother who presides over it is astonished; he never saw so many coming in his life before. "Why," says he, "there is a hundred, at least, come to confess what the Lord has done for their souls! Here are fifty come all at once to say that under such a sermon they were brought to the knowledge of the truth. Who hath begotten me these? How hath it come about? How can it be? Is not the Lord a great God that hath wrought such a work as this?" And then the converts who are thus brought into the church, if the revival continues, are very earnest ones. You never saw such a people. The outsiders call them fanatics. It is a blessed fanaticism. Others say, they are nothing but enthusiasts. It is a heavenly enthusiasm. Everything that is done is done with such spirit. If they sing, it is like the crashing thunder; if they pray, it is like the swift, sharp flash of lightning, lighting up the darkness of the cold hearted, and making them for a moment feel that there is something in prayer. When the minister preaches, he preaches like a Boanerges, and when the church is gathered together, it is with a hearty good will. When they give, they give with enlarged liberality; when they visit the sick, they do it with gentleness, meekness, and love. Everything is done with a single eye to God's glory; not of men, but by the power of God. Oh! that we might see such a revival as this!

But, blessed be God, it does not end here. The revival of the church then touches the rest of society. Men, who do not come forward and profess religion, are more punctual in attending the means of grace. Men that used to swear, give it up; they find it is not suitable for the times. Men that profaned the Sabbath, and that despised God, find it will not do; they give it all up. Times get changed; morality prevails; the lower ranks are affected. They buy a sermon where they used to buy some penny tract of nonsense. The higher orders are also touched; they too are brought to hear the word. Her ladyship, in her carriage, who never would have thought of going to so mean a place as a conventicle, does not now care where she goes so long as she is blessed. She wants to hear the truth; and a drayman pulls his horses up by the side of her ladyship's pair of grays, and they both go in and bend together before the throne of sovereign grace. All classes are affected. Even the senate feels it; the statesman himself is surprised at it, and wonders what all these things mean. Even the monarch on the throne feels she has become the monarch of a people better than she knew before, and that God is doing something in her realms past all her thought—that a great King is swaying a better sceptre and exerting a better influence than even her excellent example. Nor does it even end there. Heaven is filled. One by one the converts die, and heaven gets fuller; the harps of heaven are louder, the songs of angels are inspired with new melody, for they rejoice to see the sons of men prostrate before the throne. The universe is made glad: it is God's own summer; it is the universal spring. The time of the singing of birds is come; the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. Oh! that God might send us such a revival of religion as this!

I thank God, that we, as a people, have had great cause to thank him that we have had a measure of revival of this kind, but nothing compared with what we desire. I have heard of revivals, where twenties, and thirties, and forties, and fifties, were gathered in; but, tell it to the honour of our God, there is never a month passes, but our baptismal pool is opened, and never a communion Sabbath, but we receive many into the fold of the Lord. As many as three hundred in one year have we added to the church, and still the cry is, "They come! they come!" and were but our new sanctuary built, I am persuaded, that in six months from its erection, instead of having twelve hundred members, I should be the pastor of at least two thousand. For I believe there are many of you who attend this hall in the morning, who find it quite impossible to crowd into the chapel in the evening, and are only waiting and anxious, that you may tell to me and to the brethren, what God has done for your souls. This I know, the Lord hath been very gracious to us, and to him be the honour of it. But we want more. Our souls are greedily-covetous for God. Oh! that we might be all converted!

"We long to see the churches full,
That all the chosen race,
May with one voice, and heart, and tongue,
Sing his redeeming grace."

And we have to thank God, too, that it has not ended there; for we had last Sabbath evening, Exeter Hall full, Westminster Abbey full, and this place full too; and though we may not altogether agree in sentiment with all that preach, yet God bless them all! So long as Christ is preached, I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice; and I would to God that every large building in London were crowded too, and that every man who preached the Word were followed by tens of thousands, who would hear the truth. May that day soon come! and there is one heart which will rejoice in such a day more than any of you—a heart that shall always beat the highest when it sees God glorified, though our own honour should decrease.

III. Now we shall have to turn to the third point, which was a CAUTION. When Christmas Evans preached in Wales, during a time of revival, he used to make the people dance; the congregation were so excited under his ministry that they positively danced. Now I do not believe that dancing was the work of the Spirit. Their being stirred in their hearts might be the Holy Spirit's work, but the Holy Spirit does not care to make people dance under sermons; no good comes of it. Now and then among our Methodist friends there is a great break out, and we hear of a young woman in the middle of a sermon getting on the top of a form and turning round and round in ecstacy, till she falls down in a fainting fit, and they cry, "Glory be to God." Now we do not believe that that is the work of the Spirit; we believe it is ridiculous nonsense, and nothing more. In the old revivals in America a hundred years ago, commonly called "the great awakening," there were many strange things, such as continual shrieks and screams, and knockings, and twitchings, under the services. We cannot call that the work of the Spirit. Even the great Whitfield's revival at Cambuslang, one of the greatest and most remarkable revivals that were ever known, was attended by some things that we cannot but regard as superstitious wonders. People were so excited, that they did not know what they did. Now, if in any revival you see any of these strange contortions of the body, always distinguish between things that differ. The Holy Spirit's work is with the mind, not with the body in that way. It is not the will of God that such things should disgrace the proceedings. I believe that such things are the result of Satanic malice. The devil sees that there is a great deal of good doing; "Now," says he, "I'll spoil it all. I'll put my hoof in there, and do a world of mischief. There are souls being converted; I will let them get so excited that they will do ludicrous things, and then it will all be brought into contempt." Now, if you see any of these strange things arising, look out. There is that old Apollyon busy, trying to mar the work. Put such vagaries down as soon as you can, for where the Spirit works, he never works against his own precept, and his precept is, "Let all things be done decently and in order." It is neither decent nor orderly for people to dance under the sermon, nor howl, nor scream, while the gospel is being preached to them, and therefore it is not the Spirit's work at all, but mere human excitement.

And again, remember that you must always distinguish between man and man

THE GREAT REVIVAL.

in the work of revival. While, during a revival of religion, a very large number of people will be really converted, there will be a very considerable portion who will be merely excited with animal excitement, and whose conversion will not be genuine. Always expect that, and do not be surprised if you see it. It is but a law of the mind that men should imitate one another, and it seems but reasonable, that when one person is truly converted, there should be a kind of desire to imitate it in another, who yet is not a possessor of true and sovereign grace. Be not discouraged, then, if you should meet with this in the midst of a revival. It is no proof that it is not a true revival; it is only a proof that it is not true in that particular case.

I must say, once more, that if God should send us a great revival of religion, it will be our duty not to relax the bonds of discipline. Some churches, when they increase very largely, are apt to take people into their number by wholesale, without due and proper examination. We ought to be just as strict in the paroxysms of a revival as in the cooler times of a gradual increase, and if the Lord sends his Spirit like a hurricane, it is ours to deal with skill with the sails, lest the hurricane should wreck us by driving us upon some fell rock that may do us serious injury. Take care, ye that are officers in the church, when ye see the people stirred up, that ye exercise still a holy caution, lest the church become lowered in its standard of piety by the admission of persons not truly saved.

IV. With these words of caution, I shall now gather up my strength, and with all my might labour to stir you up to seek of God a great revival of religion throughout the length and breadth of this land.

Men, brethren and fathers, the Lord God hath sent us a blessing. One blessing is the earnest of many. Drops precede the April showers. The mercies which he has already bestowed upon us are but the forerunners and the preludes of something greater and better yet to come. He has given us the former, let us seek of him the latter rain, that his grace may be multiplied among us, and his glory may be increased. There are some of you to whom I address myself this morning who stand in the way of any revival of religion. I would affectionately admonish you, and beseech you, not to impede the Lord's own work. There be some of you, perhaps, here present to-day who are not consistent in your living. And yet you are professors of religion; you take the sacramental cup into your hand and drink its sacred wine, but still you live as worldlings live, and are as carnal and as covetous as they. Oh, my brother, you are a serious drawback to the church's increase. God will never bless an unholy people, and in proportion to our unholiness, he will withhold the blessing from us. Tell me of a church that is inconsistent, you shall tell me of a church that is unblessed. God will first sweep the house before he will come to dwell in it. He will have his church pure before he will bless it with all the blessings of his grace. Remember that, ye inconsistent ones, and turn unto God, and ask to be rendered holy. There are others of you that are so cold-hearted, that you stand in the way of all progress. You are a skid upon the wheels of the church. It cannot move for you. If we would be earnest, you put your cold hand on everything that is bold and daring. You are not prudent and zealous; if you were so, we would bless God for giving you that prudence, which is a jewel for which we ought ever to thank God, if we have a prudent man among us. But there are some of you to whom I allude, who are prudent, but you are cold. You have no earnestness, you do not labour for Christ, you do not serve him with all your strength. And there are others of you who are imprudent enough to push others on, but never go forward yourselves. O ye Laodiceans, ye that are neither hot nor cold, remember what the Lord hath said of you—"So then, because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." And so will he do with you. Take heed, take heed, you are not only hurting yourselves, but you are injuring the church. And then there are others of you who are such sticklers for order, so given to everything that has been, that you do not care for any revival, for fear we should hurt you. You would not have the church repaired, lest we should touch one piece of the venerable moss that coats it. You would not cleanse your own garment, because there is ancient dirt upon it. You think that because a thing is ancient, therefore it must be venerable. You are lovers of the antique. You would not have a road mended, because your grandfather drove his waggon along the rut that is there. "Let it always be there," you say; "Let it always be knee-deep." Did not your grandfather go through it when it was knee deep with mud, and why

should not you do the same? It was good enough for him, and it is good enough for you. You always have taken an easy seat in the chapel. You never saw a revival; you do not want to see it. You believe it is all nonsense, and that it is not to be desired. You look back; you find no precedent for it. Doctor So-and-so did not talk about it. Your venerable minister who is dead did not talk so, you say; therefore it is not needed. We need not tell you it is scriptural; that you do not care for. It is not orderly, you say. We need not tell you the thing is right; you care more about the thing being ancient than being good. Ah, you will have to get out of the way now, it isn't any good; you may try to stop us, but we will run over you if you do not get out of the way. With a little warning we shall have to run over your prejudices and incur your anger. But your prejudices must not, cannot, restrain us. The chain may be never so rusty with age, and never so stamped with authority, the prisoner is always happy to break it, and however your fetters may shackle us, we will dash them in pieces if they stand in the way of the progress of the kingdom of Christ.

Having thus spoken to those who hinder, I want to speak to you who love Jesus with all your hearts, and want to promote it. Dear friends, I beseech you remember that men are dying around you by thousands. Will you let your eye follow them into the world of shades? Myriads of them die without God, without Christ, without hope. My brother, does not their fearful fate awake your sympathy. You believe, from Scriptural warrant, that those who die without faith go to that place where "their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched." Believing this, is not your soul stirred within you in pity for their fate? Look around you to-day. You see a vast host gathered together, professedly for the service of God. You know also how many there are here who fear him not, but are strangers to themselves and strangers to the cross. What! Do you know yourself what a solemn thing it is to be under the curse, and will you not pray and labour for those around you that are under the curse to-day? Remember your Master's cross. He died for sinners; will not you weep for them?

"Did Christ o'er sinners weep;
And shall your cheek be dry?"

Did he give his whole life for them, and will not you stir up your life to wrestle with God, that his purposes may be accomplished on their behalf? You have unconverted children—do you not want them saved? You have brothers, husbands, wives, fathers, that are this day in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity; do you not want a revival, even if it were only for their sakes? Behold, how much of robbery, of murder, of crime, stains this poor land. Do you not want a revival of religion, if it were merely for quenching the flames of crime? See how God's name every day is blasphemed. Mark how, this day, trades are carried on, as if it were man's day, and not God's. Mark how multitudes are going the downward course, merry on their way to destruction. Do you not feel for them? Are your hearts hard and stolid? Has your soul become steeled? Has it become frozen like an iceberg? O sun of righteousness arise, and melt the icy heart, and make us all feel how fearful it is for immortal souls to perish; for men to be hurried into eternity without God, and without hope. Oh, will you not now, from this time forth, begin to pray that God may send forth his Word and save them, that his own name may be glorified?

As for you that fear not God, see how much ado we are making about you. Your souls are worth more than you think for. O that ye would believe in Christ, to the salvation of your souls!

[SECOND EDITION.]

THE PERSONALITY AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 10TH, 1868,

BY THE REV. WILLIAM BLOOD, A.M.,

(Incumbent of Temple Grafton, and Chaplain to the Most Noble Marquis of Hertford)

IN ST. THOMAS' CHURCH, STEPFNEY, FOR THE LIQUIDATION OF THE DEBT.

In the publication of a Second Edition I have thought it well to insert the following note, with the hope that they who peruse the Sermon may do so in the same devout spirit of the writer, and that similar holy emotions may be enjoyed by them as were excited in him while reading it. The words are reported with scarcely a verbal correction as they came warm from my heart and lips. May the desire which influenced them in the utterance—the sanctification and happiness of God's people—be realised by the readers:—

"Accept my sincere thanks, my good sir, for allowing me the perusal of this and your other sermons. I devoted the whole of yesterday morning to the careful and steady reading of that on the "Work of the Holy Spirit," which excluded all worldly thoughts from my mind. The glorious feelings produced in me by that sermon can only be conceived, but not expressed (at least by so incompetent a person as myself). My conscience has for some time been awakened, and I am brought to feel and know

"Tis religion that can give sweetest pleasures while we live;

"Tis religion must supply solid comfort when we die;

After death its joys shall be lasting as eternity.

With the united best thanks and kind regards of myself and family, believe me, my dear sir, yours very sincerely,

"Chateau de Belle vue-Boulogne-Sur-Mer."

"JOHN ATKINS."

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter," &c.—John xiv. 16, 17.

O gracious and eternal God! solemnise the minds of those present before Thee. Cause the Holy Spirit to come down on them, that remembering they are under Thy scrutinising eye, that eye which looks to the inmost soul and searches the thoughts and feelings of the mind and heart, may lift up their souls in prayer to Thee for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, while they wait in Thy presence; that as the rain descends to water the fructifying earth, and as the gentle shower which has just descended to refresh the atmosphere and cause the soil to vegetate, so Thy blessed Spirit may come down, "as dew on the tender grass" on this part of the vineyard, to bedew their souls, to soften their hearts, to fill them with love to God and love to man, to cause the seed of divine truth to germinate within them and produce fruit to Thy glory. O, God grant that this may be "a time of refreshing coming from Thy presence, for the sake of Jesus Christ!"

My beloved friends, sometimes the hearers forget while in the house of God, that they have a duty to perform as important as that of the minister of Christ; for while it is his privilege and duty to proclaim the Gospel of the grace of God, it is your duty and privilege to accompany him with your fervent prayers, that the Holy Ghost may accompany the word which he utters to the hearts of those who are present. Great responsibility rests on you at this time, you who are believers, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, who know the power of the Gospel. Remember, you are actually and truly responsible for the efficacy of the Gospel in a great degree; for, if by prayer you implore not God to stretch forth His hand, how can you expect the Gospel to be blessed! Remember the prayer of Abraham and God's answer: that while Abraham interceded for the ungodly city, God heard him, and expressed His willingness to grant his request, and that Abraham left off praying, before God left off answering. May the love of Christ constrain you, and may your hearts respond to this appeal, and ascend to heaven in holy aspirations now, that the Holy Ghost may be poured upon us, not to-morrow or next Sunday more, but at the present time.

I have been in America, that land of revivals, and oh, the glorious scenes which I have witnessed there, when a whole assembly, while hearing the Gospel, have been subdued by its power, and when the reclined head and tearful eyes and the sighs and sobs

which were heaved, intimated that, "God was among them of a truth." And why not so here? Because God's people do not beseege the throne of grace in prayer; "they have not," simply "because they ask not or because they ask amiss," or do not ask in faith for that great gift which *God has promised to bestow*. The church of God is divided into sects and parties, fragments and factions here and there scattered, having lost the unity of the church of Jesus. This should not be the case. That party is striving for its own little section, as if it alone were the church of Christ, and that section for the advancement of its peculiar interest, instead of seeking for the wide diffusion of the Holy Spirit, that all may be blended into one, that there may be *ONE FOLD UNDER ONE SHEPHERD*. Yes, the great thing the church of Christ needs at this present day, to heal all divisions and cause all to *become one, in answer to the prayer of Christ*, is a greater measure of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the descent of the Spirit of God. This is what we want to fill the heart with love; this absorbing theme is the topic which should fill the minds and souls of all believers, and they should give God no rest day or night till He pour out that Spirit to make His spiritual "Jerusalem a praise and glory in the whole earth."

Our blessed Lord, when about to leave His disciples, gathered them together, and sorrow intense filled His soul. His mind was fixed upon the subject of which His disciples at that time knew but little. Yes Jesus could say to them, "Sorrow hath filled your hearts;" because they were in grief as they gazed on the countenance of the sorrowful Jesus, as they saw the indications of His troubled spirit in His very visage, when He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." He *knew* the awful passage He was now about to pass through; it was to be to Him the dark dreary valley of the shadow of death. He *knew* that the instruments of torture were about to be prepared to put His body to an agonising and torturing death; He *knew*, too, that during "the hour of the power of darkness," even the Father whom He loved would withdraw His presence from Him; that all alone He, Jesus, might tread the wine-press of divine justice—of His Father's wrath against sin—that He would have no consolation in the absence of the presence of His Father, no mitigation of His anguish; He *knew* that He was to be left alone to pass through that scene of horror for the salvation of the souls of His people; therefore "His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" He could say, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished;" He *knew* He could not avoid the pain, the agony, the torture; He was not left in ignorance, as we are sometimes when we know not the trials through which we are to pass; we are left, as it were, in blissful ignorance of these afflictive circumstances through which we are to be led; the billows by which we are to be buffeted, we know not of them, and therefore we are saved from the pain of anticipation; but it was not so with thee, O Jesus! Thou didst *know* of them before the time; thou wast certain of the trials which awaited thee, and therefore, sorrow filled thy heart as thou wast preparing to go through that dreadful scene.

But mark the love of the Lord Jesus! Although He knew of all this He would not shrink from the trial; although He knew He must pass through terrible scenes, yet, while without comfort Himself, He strove to console the hearts of His disciples, and He calls them together. He tells them to go and prepare the passover, and then, when He was approaching that table, where the paschal lamb is to be the type of Himself; on which they are now to feed, a typical representation of the strength and vigour which their souls should obtain by faith in Him—the true paschal Lamb—the Lord Jesus says, "With desire, I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer;" and then it is He tells them that He is about to be removed from them by death, and He says, "Sorrow hath filled your hearts because I said, a little while and I shall be with you, and again a little while and I shall not be with you, because I go to my Father." Oh! could we imagine the expression of the tenderness and kindness of our Lord Jesus when he uttered these words, what mingled emotions were evidenced in His visage? Behold Him looking intently to the agony which He was about to endure—to the garden of Gethsemane, where during the dark hours of midnight, "in agony He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became as great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Yet, looking forward, He says to them in the language of consolation, I have provided for you when I shall be taken away—and as fathers or mothers, who are about to leave their children behind them as orphans in the world, wish to speak to their beloved ones some words of consolation before they go hence; as the parent calls to his bedside his children and commits to them his last words, and tries to console them; so our blessed Lord calls around Him those whom He loved and says to them, "I will not leave you comfortless" (as orphans) in this cold heart-

less world. Sorrow fills your heart because I am about to be taken away from you, but "I will send you *another Comforter* who will *abide with you for EVER*." I am with you now only for a little while, but I must be taken away, and "it is *expedient* for you that I go away;" it is necessary for your holiness, and your happiness, and your usefulness that I should be taken away from you—that I go away; "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."

So God often deprives His dear and beloved people of the blessings they prize; blessings which are given to them by Himself; He often, I say, takes away these blessings, in order to prepare them for *greater* blessings; and thus sometimes He says to the husband, "the wife whom you love, who has been your helpmate for years, it is necessary that she should be taken away from you by death, because she keeps your heart from Me; it is expedient that this blessing should be removed, that I may have more of your affections, and that thus you may be prepared for greater blessings which I am ready and willing to bestow. Thus He speaks sometimes to Christian parents who delight in their beloved child; God says—that child whom you love I will take away by death; it may be that I will defer the time when he shall become a Christian, and your heart shall be afflicted at this trial, but it is necessary, it is expedient that these gifts be taken from you to make way for greater gifts, to make you more holy, spiritually minded and devoted; I will take from you your Isaac, that you may have Myself, as the source of the greatest delight and the highest joy, that you may find riches in myself. I will take from you health, that in retirement, you who have been too busy about the affairs of life, may be alone with Me in the silent chamber; that during the hours of the day you may be "alone with Jesus." It is necessary for you that this gift be taken away, that greater gifts may be given to you, even "spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Thus God calls on His people even to pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death, and takes from them light and life and friends and property, but all in love; to prepare them for the reception of a greater blessing, and that greater blessing is Himself; to have God in the soul, to have the temple of our affections dedicated to Him, to have the soul the enshrinement of God's presence, "Christ in the heart, the hope of glory."

If we did not love these earthly things as we do, it would not be an affliction to leave them; if our hearts did not cling to earth and earthly objects, it would be no trial to part with them. The believer is called on to stand loose from the world, to hold all things with a light hold, not to grasp them; and therefore the Christian, if his heart was consecrated to God, and heavenly objects were the objects on which his soul's desires were fixed, even death would be no trial, and he would say in the language of Paul, "I am in a strait—having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better." Oh! did you love the Lord Jesus Christ as you ought, were He to you "the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely," would you not desire to leave this sublunary state of things—this world with all its comforts and all its friendship, even Christian friendship, to go to behold the full-orbed glory of Christ, to gaze on "the King in His beauty," to be introduced to the company of priests and prophets and kings, to see those glorified ones who have passed over before you—to be in their company and cast your crown before "Jesus who washed you from your sins in His own blood?" Oh yes, it is because our thoughts are too earthly, it is because our minds are fixed on earthly objects, that therefore we feel trial and affliction and sorrow when God takes them away from us, although the removal be a preparation for a greater blessing. Because He loves us, He chastens us, "Him whom He loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth," and this is to make us "*partakers of His own holiness*," to assimilate us to His own image, to sublimate our affections—to conform us to the likeness of the Lord Jesus—to make us more spiritual, more holy, more heavenly-minded.

Now, our blessed Saviour says, in reference to the great gift of the Holy Ghost, it was *necessary*, that even HIS OWN PRESENCE should be removed. Who could imagine, if the Lord were now present with us in this assembly, and if our eyes could be fixed on His presence, if we could hear the words of love from His lips, were our ears to be gladdened by the sound of His heavenly voice, and we heard the pure doctrines of the Gospel from the lips of God incarnate, who could imagine it would be better that He should be taken from us? But our Lord said to His disciples when visibly present among them, when they were gazing on Him, when they heard the words of Christ from Himself, when their hearts were cheered by His language, and stimulated by His holy example, yet Jesus says, it is better for you that I should be taken away. "It is *expedient* for you that I go away," not that I should go away and be absent;

but when I depart, the greater gift will be given to you—"for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."

There are two great works for which this great world was created, and for which this world continues, for which its continuance is perpetuated. God has, of course, designs to answer in the creation of the world, and the preservation of all things—the manifestation of His character, His moral and physical attributes—but this world is continued, that there may be a display of two great works, namely, the work of REDEMPTION, and the work of SANCTIFICATION. The work of redemption was finished by the Lord Jesus Christ; it was His especial work to redeem the soul from sin: the work of REDEMPTION was external, and completed when He expired on the Cross of Calvary, when He exclaimed, "It is finished." Then the work of Redemption was complete, and it is impossible to add any thing whatever to that finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ—it is perfect in itself; and though all the angels of heaven were to come to earth and were to be crucified, the crucifixion of all the angels of glory could not add any thing to the work of Jesus Christ: it has been finished, it is perfect, it is complete: and all the sufferings, even of God's people, all the tears of compassion they may shed over lost wandering souls, all the exertions they make in endeavouring to promote the glory of Christ, though they gave their bodies to be burned and all their goods to feed the poor—all could not add anything whatever to the work of redemption, "IT IS FINISHED." This robs man of all glory, so that his *bad* works are as meritorious as his *good* works. Does this expression startle you? Yes it may, but is it not true? Your bad works are as meritorious, that is, your good works have not more merit than your bad works. It is a strong expression, but it sets the idea before the mind clearly and distinctly, to rid you of the conception that your good works have the least degree of merit. They have none; though you should give your "first-born for the transgression, the fruit of your body for the sin of your soul," you could not add anything whatever to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ—the work of redemption. No! Thy work, blessed Saviour, is thine own work; Thou must have all the glory; therefore in heaven there shall be no boasting; for all redeemed by the Lord Jesus give up all hope of merit, and they cast their crowns at the feet of Christ, crying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be the glory;" "they have washed their robes and made them white in the *blood of the Lamb*" alone; heaven therefore will be glorious and every heart filled with love and gratitude, because all who get admittance there shall know, that they have been saved solely by sovereign grace. The work of redemption is finished!

But, *the work of the Holy Ghost is not finished.* That is the work of sanctification: it is not external as the work of Christ was, it is internal in the soul. The spirit of man is to come in contact with the Spirit of God; therefore Jesus Christ says, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him." The worldly man has no conception of the Spirit of God; he does not comprehend you when you talk of the work of the Holy Ghost. "The natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;" it is impossible; because they are discerned by the Spirit Himself or by the aid of the Holy Ghost internally, consequently the carnal mind cannot comprehend or understand the things of the Spirit. "I will send you," says Christ, "another Comforter and He shall abide with you for ever."

The gift of the Holy Ghost is a perpetual gift, not given and then to be withdrawn. No, the *indwelling* of the Holy Ghost is the privilege of the child of God, is the privilege of the believer. The Spirit is not promised to come to the soul of the Christian as a visitor. A visitor is one that comes to the house of a friend for a short time and then goes away, but the inhabitant is one who lives there, who dwells there, who has his home in the house. So, the believer's soul is to be the temple of the Holy Ghost, and God says "I will dwell in them and walk in them;" I will *reside* with them, "and they shall be my people and I will be their God." "The Spirit of God," saith Jesus, "dwelleth with you, and shall be in you;" because Jesus Christ had "the Holy Ghost given to Him without measure, and dwelling in Him;" for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He was *with* the disciples but not as yet *in* them, as afterwards He would be; Jesus said unto them, "He dwelleth with you," not *in* them. The Holy Ghost abode in Jesus who stood in the midst of them; but "He that dwelleth with you," Christ graciously says, "shall also *be in you*."

And so "upon the day of Pentecost as they were all assembled in one place, sud-

denly they heard the noise of a rushing mighty wind, (the Holy Ghost coming down) and it filled all the place where they were sitting, and sat upon them like flaming tongues of fire;" indicating the heat, the warmth by which their souls would be imbued by the Holy Ghost, and shewing, that He could loose the tongues of the stammerers, and enable them to speak to the Heathen of the wonderful works of God: and all those present heard in their own tongues of the things of Christ, the wonderful works of God; the Holy Ghost coming within them, inspiring their souls, and enabling their tongues to speak to the understanding of all. The day of miracles has passed, but the gift of the Spirit is a perpetual gift to the Church of Christ; and therefore we find the primitive Christians (they were Christians, that is like Christ, because they had conferred on them the Holy Spirit of God) were regenerate in their nature, renewed in the spirit of their minds by the Holy Ghost, made new creatures by the Spirit of God. Their souls were filled with the love of Christ, because the Holy Ghost was *given to them*," and the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost," and they comprehended, in some degree, "the breadth, and depth and height of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge;" because they were "filled with all the fulness of God."

Oh, yea, this is the gift we require. We all hear Christ preached, Christ exalted; we all hear the Gospel—but we want something with the Gospel, in addition to the Gospel; for even the pure word of God itself is ineffectual to the conversion of the soul without the operation of the Holy Ghost; it is "a dead letter;" so that the inspired Apostle Paul and the eloquent Apollos might preach ineffectually, for it was God alone that could give the increase. "Not by might or by power," is the testimony of the eternal God Himself, "but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." And just as in nature we require the aid of the fructifying rain, the descent of the dew on the soil as well as the glowing heat and light of the sun, so we require, with the light of the Gospel of Christ, with God's Word itself, we require in addition, superadded, the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Ghost to come like the fertilising rain, to soften the soil of the heart and cause the seed of the Word to take root; for without the Holy Ghost, angels might preach the Gospel without effect; yea, Christ Himself did preach the Gospel, and many of His hearers remained unconverted, for without the Spirit of God, even the Divine Word will prove ineffectual.

This ought to convince us of the necessity of not depending on the means—of not relying on the fact of coming to God's house and hearing God's Word—coming like God's people, and sitting as God's people, and departing as God's people, and yet our hearts uninfluenced. Oh, we must look away from all means, and through all means up to God, and not be content with anything short of the Holy Spirit coming to the soul. Like as the water-pipes, which, in their ramifications, go to every house in the city, would be perfectly useless, were not the pure water to go through the channels, through those conduits to supply the inhabitants; so all the means of grace, even God's Word and the ordinances of God's house are but the channels, empty in themselves, unless the heavenly water, the life-giving streams, come down from God's throne into the cistern of the heart, to fill the heart with holy feelings and the mind with heavenly thoughts.

O Spirit of the eternal God, come down through these means and touch every heart and fill every soul with thy presence!

"It is expedient for you," said Jesus, "that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." He is called the COMFORTER, and why? Do not all present here know the meaning of the term comforter, in reference to your earthly pilgrimage in the trials and afflictions of this life. How pleasant, if an individual who has been deprived of property and seems to be friendless and forsaken, a person who once occupied an important position and had an abundance of every thing desirable, with friends around him, but who now, by the reverse of fortune, is plunged into poverty and distress; friends have forsaken him with his fortune, and now he treads his lowly path through difficulties, friendless and forsaken;—how pleasant I say to have one friend to come to him. Oh, how cheering to that individual to have one friend remaining, who clings to him amidst his trials and misfortunes, visits his humble cot and tries to cheer him in his solitude, to speak to him words of comfort, when laid on a bed of sorrow and sickness and poverty,—to have one not ashamed of him in poverty and distress, to sit beside his bed and wipe from his brow the cold dew of death, apply to his parched lips water to refresh him, and whisper into his ear consolation amidst desolation and sorrow. That person is a *comforter*; because he comforts the heart broken by misfortune, and tries to cheer a spirit over-

whelmed with grief. And such is the promised gift of Christ to His disciples, when He says, "I will send you another *Comforter*." When Christ was with His disciples, He cheered and comforted them, but now that He was to be taken from them, and they left in this world amidst trials and difficulties and persecutions and the suffering from the loss of all things, He tells them, that that loss would be compensated to them, because they are to have greater than the gain of all earthly kingdoms;—and happier is the humble believer in his poverty, even in a dismal dungeon—who has Christ in his heart, than the prince with a crown on his brow, and swaying his sceptre over an empire, without Christ. The poor man in his poverty, and lying upon the couch of death, with Jesus in his soul and the Holy Ghost as his *Comforter*, is happier than the highest and mightiest potentate in this world, who has not Christ and the Holy Spirit; for happiness does not consist in things but in thoughts: happiness is not that which is *external*, it is *internal*; happiness is not outward, it is in the mind, and whatever, or whoever, produces happiness in the mind and consolation in the soul may well be called a *comforter*; and there is no happiness of which the soul is susceptible, or which it is possible for it to derive from earthly objects, that can be compared with the exquisite comfort imparted to the soul of the believer by the Holy Ghost. There is no joy of the same nature or of the same kind; none that can ever approach it in the least degree: for the joy imparted to the spirit of the Christian, to the soul of the believer by the operation of the Holy Ghost, as far transcends all the happiness that the world can give to man without Christ, as the blazing light of the sun transcends the twinkling light of the star of midnight. The soul is the image of God; it was created to enjoy God, it is of His nature, and that which suits the soul is God Himself; therefore, the spirit of man without God is restless in this world, and going about to seek happiness out of Him is always disappointed; because, having left God, "the fountain of living waters, it goes to cisterns, broken cisterns which can hold no water;" and the man who does so, however intelligent he may be in secular matters; however wise above his fellows, that man with all his intellectual endowments is foolish, and shews he does not possess common sense in spiritual things, who will not give up all for that happiness which the Spirit imparts, for that joy which satisfies and fills the immortal mind with intense and incomparable delight. But the carnal mind cannot conceive the exquisite joy of the child of God. It cannot comprehend it.

All, however, are panting for happiness of some sort; every individual is seeking happiness; that is inherent in our nature; one remnant of the fall; but the error is, that while the soul is thirsting for its element, it goes not to its proper source. Is it not foolish, not to give up all to obtain that joy which will satisfy it, fill it completely, to *completion*, and enable it to say, I am happy, satisfied; my soul is filled, it can hold no more?

It is the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the immortal God, which comes into the soul of man to fill that soul with joy and peace, which suits the soul, is consistent with its nature. For this end the soul was called into being, and endowed with the faculty of love, capable of exercising that emotion upon God; that God in Christ might be the object to fill the soul with joy, with the love that was in Christ Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit which produces this love and joy. He is therefore called the *COMFORTER*. And is it not so when the believer, tried and afflicted in this life, tempted in the furnace of affliction, or in the chamber of death, when the Holy Ghost comes to the soul and fills the soul with delight and joy, enabling it to say in the deepest trial, in the hottest furnace, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." It was this which enabled the martyrs to stand unmoved amidst the flaming elements, and while the blaze was burning the flesh from off the bones, to rejoice, because their souls were filled with the comfort of the Holy Ghost. The Christian father, in the last hour of death, commits his children to God and dies in peace, because God the Holy Ghost applies the promise to his soul, "Leave thy fatherless children to Me, I will be the husband of the widow and the Father of the fatherless." It is this which cheers the heart of the dying mother, enabling her to give up all to Christ, and say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

But the *SPIRIT* is called not only *the Comforter*; He is also named "*THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH*." On this we might expatiate, but time forbids. He is "*the Spirit of Truth*," because the great *Teacher of the truth*; because the *WORD OF GOD* is truth, having come from Him the fountain of truth. Other teachers may sometimes teach truth and then again teach error, their teaching may be mixed with error, but the Holy Ghost is the *Teacher of the pure truth*, unadulterated truth, nothing but the truth; and where

ever souls are converted in all parts of the world by the Holy Ghost, it is by the truth, by His true teaching they are converted.

He is called also the HOLY Ghost or the HOLY Spirit; not because the Spirit is more holy than God the Father or God the Son, but because it is the province of the Holy Ghost to make holy all whom He teaches. Every subject of the Holy Ghost's teaching is to be made *pure* and *holy* like God Himself; because it is the office of the Spirit of God to purify the heart, to excite in the soul holy affections and sanctified and pure feelings; therefore when the Holy Spirit of God operates on your minds and hearts, He excites them to holiness. He teaches them to make them pure and holy, to impart to them the nature of God, "*the Divine nature*;" to assimilate the mind to the mind of God, to assimilate the affections to God's affections, to "transform us by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is the acceptable will of God," that we may perceive God in Christ. So the Apostle Paul says, speaking of the transforming power of the truth upon the mind when applied by the SPIRIT. "But we all with open or unveiled face,"—that is alluding to Moses who, when standing on the Mount, covered his face with a veil, because the brightness of God's appearance reflected by him was so great, the people could not look upon it,—"*with unveiled face beholding as in a glass*," in the Gospel,—the mirror which reflects the image of God in Christ, "*the glory of the Lord*;" as we gaze on that glory, on the person, work, life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, we behold the glory of God, reflected there, and "and we are changed by it into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Just as in a lake of tranquil water or in a polished mirror, you see the sun in the heavens reflected there; and you not only look on the brightness and glory of the luminary reflected in that peaceful lake or polished mirror, but you borrow the glory of his reflected refulgence, and while you gaze with admiration on that glorious luminary you stand in and reflect his light to others. So contemplating the heavenly image of God, the express image of God in the person of Christ,—in His *patience, humility, self-denial, and condescension*, His *devotedness* to God's service, *fergency in prayer, compassion towards His enemies, love to His people* and *zeal for the conversion* of the ungodly,—we gaze on God's image in the person and work of the Lord Jesus; and by contemplation and meditation on that likeness, our souls are absorbed with the view, blended into the same image, assimilated into the same likeness; and reflecting the glory of God, as we see it in Jesus, we become as a light to others in darkness; "we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." If you attempt it by your own unaided powers of mind without reliance on the Holy Ghost; if even while reading the Holy Scriptures, you rely not exclusively on the Holy Ghost, you cannot be changed into the image of God in Christ. It is "*by the Spirit of God*" operating on the intellectual faculties, renewing the powers of the mind and filling the heart with love, that we are to be transformed into Christ's image and assimilated into His heavenly likeness.

There are higher attainments. Why not go on to perfection? Why live in the low and unhealthy swamp, inhaling the pestiferous miasma of a sickly Christianity, where health of soul cannot be enjoyed—no vigorous or life or power? where your senses cannot be exercised to discern the truth? Why not ascend to the mountain brow and imbibe and inhale the bracing air, live in a higher region and breathe the atmosphere of heaven? Why not come to God more simply—"mount up on wings as eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint?" Why not be more in the society of Jesus, meditating on *His example, His life, His death*—on *HIS LOVE, His glory*, and thus become transformed into *His likeness*?

My beloved hearers, I have scarcely commenced on the subject. Oh, time is short, but eternity is coming. The hours glide on quickly, and here we would stay and think ourselves away to eternal bliss—Oh! that now the Spirit, of whose presence we have been speaking, of whose operations we have been talking, would descend on us! Oh, that the Holy Ghost would come down to illuminate our understandings, to influence our hearts, to raise our affections high up to heaven and heavenly objects, and make us more like to Jesus! Yes, my friends, the Holy Spirit's operations are felt operations. As the body feels the influence of the air (and this illustration the Lord uses) so the soul may feel the operations of the Spirit of God. I do not see the atmosphere, the air does not come under the cognisance of sight; but while the eye, the organ of vision, does not see that element, am I not certain that the air does exist, because my body feels it and my lungs inhale it, and I owe my life to the atmosphere as a secondary cause? And so, though I see not the Holy Spirit, no more than I do my own mind, yet the soul of the believer is sensible of His

operations, because the Holy Ghost comes in contact with the soul, and it is the privilege of the Christian to experience the joy and rejoicing imparted to the immortal soul by the Spirit of God, to be *conscious* of His presence in the soul.

I must conclude, and therefore, I would only beg of you, my brethren and sisters in Christ, in the time of your retirement, when alone with Jesus, to study the words of the Scripture which I have read from the chapters xiv., xv. and xvi. of St. John's Gospel. There you will find the Holy Ghost spoken of as a *PERSON*, not an *influence*; not a *quality* or an *attribute*, but a *PERSON*. The personal pronouns are applied to Him—names given to Him—as the “TEACHER,” “COMFORTER,” HOLY SPIRIT, GUIDE, “REMEMBRANCER,” &c.; personal actions ascribed to Him.—“He shall *teach*,” “*testify*,” “*convince of sin*,” indicating that HE, the Third Person of the Godhead, is to illuminate the mind and to guide you into all truth.

You will find in these verses, that there are *seven* operations of the Holy Ghost named; that he is spoken of as a *Teacher*, as a *Remembrancer*, as a *Testifier* of Christ, as a *Convictor* of sin, a *Revealer* of Christ Jesus, the *Guide* into all truth, as the *Glorifier* of Christ. Commencing with *teaching* the elements of truth, He goes on, step by step, in gradation, till He *glorifies* Jesus in His finished work to the soul, of the Christian and completes the work of sanctification; He perfects that soul and fits and prepares it for the perfect enjoyment of God's presence in heaven.

May that Spirit of God be poured on you, my beloved friends. O, give no rest to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids, until you feel and know of a certainty, that God is your God, and Jesus is your Redeemer; that you “rejoice in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh,” and know and be sure that your bodies are God's temples—“temples of the Holy Ghost.” Thus you may commence heaven on earth, and thus you may have the enjoyment of the bright and glorious Sun of Righteousness shining upon you in this world with the prospect of a brighter glory beyond the grave; when in that heavenly state, Christ Jesus shall reveal to you the brightness of God's countenance in unveiled splendour, in that celestial world to which you are hastening. Oh, how happy the child of God ought to be! Life here and life there; Christ here and Christ there; “Christ in the heart now, the hope of glory,” and Christ present for ever in heaven. Thus then indeed believers ought to tread the earth with a lightsome step, a blithesome heart and cheerful soul; their countenance glowing with joy to know that they are “kings and priests unto God;”—selected and brought out of the world into God's family; one people; one army under one general; marching forward, “clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners;” marching onward to heaven, the scene of triumph; the world of glory in their view. There they will soon cast their crowns before the Lamb and lift up palms of victory; and having “come off more than conquerors through Him who hath loved them, they shall shout salvation for ever and ever.”

Oh, what a glorious prospect! How different, my hearers, from that sight which these eyes gazed upon, when on the awful midnight I stood on the blazing deck of the SHIP—“THE AMAZON;” when death in all its terrific reality stood before me? But, O my God, didst thou snatch me from that burning fire and from that awful death on that dark dismal midnight, to bring me to stand before my faithful brethren and sisters, to tell them of the glories of heaven and strive to raise their thoughts to it, to strive to bring them closer to the cross of Christ, to tell them of the glorious prospect of heaven where we shall live and reign with Jesus, our Jesus for ever? Oh yes, we owe all to Thee, blessed Jesus! our happiness will be complete and our joy perfect when we see Thee whom our souls now love. Though absent from us, still we love Thee for Thine own work and Thine own character, and Thy blessed gift, the Holy Spirit. Thou hast promised, that we should not be left comfortless, but be comforted with the joy of the Holy Ghost. We bless Thee, we thank Thee!

Have you found God present my beloved? Has the Holy Ghost touched your souls? Have you sat here as God's people? have you felt the divine Spirit operating on your minds now? creating within your souls high and glorious purposes to devote yourselves entirely to Christ—of deadness to the world and consecration to God's service—that you will do something for Him who did so much for you? Has the Holy Ghost been leading you to say, “I will give all to Jesus who loved and gave *Himself*”—for whom? “for me,” for you!—gave *Himself*! what more could He have done—*Himself* for you?—O Spirit of the Eternal God descend upon our souls for Christ's sake.

EMINENT PIETY AND EFFICIENCY IN BUSINESS NOT
INCOMPATIBLE.

A Sermon

PREACHED

BY THE REV. DAVID JONES, B.A.

(Of Folkestone.)

Published by request.

"Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God."—Daniel vi. 5.

AMONG the Jewish captives whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon were "certain of the children of Israel, of the king's seed, and of the princes; children (as we are told in the first chapter of this book,) in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans;" among whom were the four celebrated youths, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Little could the Babylonian conqueror have thought how great a man one of these striplings would become; how important a part he was destined to play in the affairs of his kingdom through several succeeding reigns. The whole life of Daniel is instructive. We cannot but be thankful that the history and character of such a man are handed down to us. A man fitted to excite our admiration at whatever point in his remarkable career we regard him; whether we look at him as a mere youth, eschewing the luxuries of an eastern court, preferring "pulse to eat and water to drink" to defiling "himself with the portion of the king's meat, or with the wine which he drank;" or whether we contemplate him in early manhood rising in the estimation of the monarch whom he served by his wisdom, his talents, and his piety; or as here, in advanced life, at seventy years of age, the ripe statesman of incorruptible integrity and ready resources, baffling the intrigues of mortified rivals both by his blameless life and vigorous administration; in whom we see also the man of God, devout and holy; the prophet to whom visions of the future are given, reaching downward to the end of time. Regard him when you will, and where you will, Daniel is a character to be studied; and this text, with the connected chapter, presents to our view one of the most remarkable and instructive passages in his eventful life.

Two things in the text invite our attention.

I. *The honourable testimony borne by his enemies to Daniel's efficiency in office.*

The historical circumstances narrated in this chapter place us in thought at the conclusion of the Babylonian dynasty, and at the development of the

Medo-Persian power. By the death of Belshazzar and the conquest of Babylon, Darius, the Mede, had added an extensive territory to his empire teeming with a numerous population. Such an addition required a corresponding increase in the staff of officials requisite for its management. Accordingly, "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents (corresponding probably to our chief Secretaries of State), of whom Daniel was first (first in rank and power); that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage." Such was the machinery of government, and such were the arrangements which appear to have continued in operation for some time. Darius, however, admiring the administrative talents of Daniel, and having unbounded confidence in his character, formed the purpose of making this Daniel prime minister over the whole empire. "He was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm." Whether the king carried out his purpose may admit of doubt, but it was clearly his intention to do so. Hence arose a conspiracy among Daniel's associates in office. "Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." They have become jealous of Daniel and seek his downfall. This is not surprising. Men who aspire to high offices, or who even without seeking accept them, must be prepared for perils. "If the cup be full, it must be carried with care." But it is at this point we begin to feel the force and value of the testimony of our text. For, be it observed—

First. *The enemies of Daniel had powerful motives to seek his downfall.* Motives impure indeed, but powerful. The spirit of envy had seized them, and the mere proposal of the king was gall and wormwood to them. Daniel had not sought honour and pre-eminence; honour and pre-eminence had sought him.

"Some men are born to greatness,
Some achieve greatness :
Some have greatness thrust upon them."

Moreover, Daniel was a foreigner and a Jew. Tracing back his history, they might discover that his entrance into Babylon was made in the degrading position of a captive. Had they searched his pedigree, they might have found that the prime minister came of a noble family and sprang from the royal tribe of Judah. Probably, however, it cost their pride something to tolerate the Jewish statesman as an equal, but they could not brook his being their superior. Promotion to him, was degradation to them. Hence we may conclude, that if no "error or fault could be found in him," it was not for the want of keen-eyed search. Jealousy wonderfully sharpens the vision, and generally perverts it too. Such are the men, such their position, such their feelings and motives. They are bent on humbling Daniel. But after narrowly watching his conduct to find some available flaw, they are baffled, and have to confess, that "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Not only had they powerful motives, but

Secondly, *They had ample scope.* When men are bent on doing mischief,

they can generally succeed, even where the sphere is limited and the chances comparatively few. The confession of these men would have been high praise for the obscurest subordinate in the employ of the Persian Prince. How much more when it can be affirmed of a man holding Daniel's high position. His office was one of great responsibility. Important and extensive interests were committed to his care. The revenues of the kingdom passed through his hands. Inferior officers transferred the tolls and taxes to him, of which due accounts must have been kept. Probably not a day passed without some important transaction in which the sagacity and the integrity of Daniel were required. Day by day the conspirators watched to see if there were any deficiency or defalcation in the revenue, arising from misappropriation or mistake, and they found no flaw there. They examine his accounts; these are all right. They pry into his correspondence; that is loyal and honourable. They keep a sharp look out for any attempts at arbitrary conduct, for abuse of power, for any attempts at personal aggrandizement. They are disappointed there. Short-comings of this character, or cases of mal-administration on the part of Daniel could not have escaped the quick eye of his two rivals; and errors of this kind, could they have been detected, would have served their purpose far more directly than the round-about scheme which they got up on the score of his religion. But notwithstanding the ample scope afforded; after searching on all sides and watching every opportunity for his halting, the rivals find "none occasion nor fault." Daniel is found to be provokingly correct in all his accounts; unquestionably efficient in all his public measures, and his moral character is above suspicion. They could not touch him there. Like other men, he had his imperfections. But it was well known that in the estimation of Darius he stood deservedly high. The king knew his worth too well to part with him lightly, and it was useless to lay before him any trifling complaint. The charge might recoil on the accusers: and as to complaints of a graver character, they dared not make any; "forasmuch as Daniel was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him."

Let us now consider the second point in the text.

II. *The last resort of his malicious enemies.*

Their confession is, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Unable to found a charge against him in respect of his civil duties, they look in another direction, and basely lay a plot for his ruin concerning the law of his God, i.e. concerning his religion. You know the scheme, and how it utterly failed. The cowardly conspiracy together with its terrible recoil on the conspirators, is fully developed in the remainder of this chapter. They induce Darius, the king, in an unguarded hour, to make "a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions." Daniel remains faithful. He is "found praying and making supplications before his God, as he did aforetime." He suffers the appointed penalty. He is cast into the den of lions. But God "sent his angel, and shut the lions' mouths," and the savage beasts hurt not him. In awful retribution, the conspirators with their wives and children are in turn cast into the lions' den; "and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den." Thus the enemies of Daniel are "taken in their own trap, and are fallen into the pit their own hands have digged." And now this last

resort of his enemies, this aiming to find something against the Jew "concerning the law of his God" affords several important lessons which the reader of these pages will do well to consider. Mark, then,

First, *There was another chance, and that chance lay in the man's religion.* It was known that Daniel was not only sagacious, but that he was also a truly pious man. He was eminently devout. The law of the Lord was his delight. Prayer was the element of his soul's existence. That comprehensive mind of his which fitted him so eminently for the cares of secular office was sanctified to a far nobler ministry. It became the chosen medium through which the spirit of prophecy conveyed to mankind some of its sublimest revelations. Daniel was a statesman and something more.

Reader, how is it with you? Are you a tradesman and something more? Society abounds with efficient men of business, who are that, and, morally, nothing more. Suppose an enemy to your prosperity, bent on doing you harm, found himself (as in Daniel's case) baffled on the score of general efficiency and commercial credit, what would be the probable result if he proposed damaging your worldly position and reputation through the medium of your religion. Would the answer be, oh! as to religion he makes no pretence. There is no substance there to drive a nail into. Mark, it is not simply moral character that is involved in this inquiry. Thorough honesty and honour might sufficiently explain the accuracy of Daniel's accounts. But his religion was something beyond common honesty and honour. His religion went to the length of "kneeling upon his knees three times a day," and praying and giving thanks before his God. My friend, have you any other and nobler life than that which is passed in "buying, selling, and getting gain?" Have you any other than that which is connected with your trade and profession? Excel by all means in your chosen department of honourable toil, whether it be lofty or lowly; whether you move among the merchant princes of our land or among its busy artisans. But after all, permit me to tell you, that if life ends there; if this be the sum total of your present existence, it is, as compared with what it ought to be, a rather despicable concern. Daniel managed the affairs of Darius' kingdom in a most efficient style. But there was another kingdom to which he belonged, another master whom he served. Happy was "the well-beloved Gaius" of old, when the Apostle John could address him thus, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper, and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." And you may depend upon it, that without true religion, without a life of prayer, without a life of faith on the Son of God and obedience to his commands, without a life in which the moral nature shall have its share of attention, in which the soul shall get spiritual culture and preparation for the future, your life, however satisfactory in other respects, is an incomplete thing, and if persisted in, will eventually prove a failure. For "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul! or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?"

Secondly, *Daniel's religion was reliable.* His enemies and rivals knew this, and matured their plans accordingly. They knew that he was no mere professor or trifler. Religion with him was a glorious reality. They had found him faithful in things secular, and they confidently believed they should find him equally faithful in things sacred. Surrounded by no congenial spirits, living among a nation whom he must regard as idolators, and possibly among not a few Jews who had forsaken the Lord, they saw in Daniel an honest

and fearless professor of religion ; a man of decision, the tone of whose piety was elevated, whose religious habits and exercises were fixed and punctual ; who, while others worshipped visible images their own hands might make or destroy, persisted in worshipping in a foreign land the God of his Fathers ; invisible, but Maker of heaven and earth. They saw in Daniel a man whose religion was altogether so reliable, that they could make his frequent prayers to God a sure basis of calculation, in forming their schemes for his overthrow. They entertained the expectation that all firm decrees against prayer notwithstanding, Daniel would not fail to pray. Nor did they overrate his constancy. For he continued making supplications before his God, as he did aforetime.

Presuming that you are a professor of religion, let me ask, what is the *quality* of your religion ? Is it reliable ? Could either friends or foes reckon upon it securely ? "Is your heart established in the truth," or are you moved about by every wind that blows ? Are your principles fixed, and is your conduct consistent ? Do you follow the fashion that rules the hour, or do you steadfastly adhere to "the good old way ?" In times of trial, when the rights of conscience are menaced and your fidelity to Christ and his laws are put to the test, are you found among the ranks of weak waverers or among the steadfast adherents to the truth ? Amid many temptations to laxity, lukewarmness, and compromise, can the cause of truth and righteousness feel sure that in you it may reckon on unswerving fidelity ? In regard to the support of Christian institutions, the circulation of the Scriptures, the maintenance of the Christian ministry, the sustainment of all means whereby the glorious gospel is diffused for the salvation of perishing sinners, may men calculate on your cordial co-operation and faithful help ? Or taking a more limited view of Christian obligation, as connected with the cause of Christ in the locality where you live, are you to be relied on there ? Do you redeem the pledges of consecration often given to the Saviour who redeemed you with his own most precious blood ? Can he count on your warm attachment and faithful service ? Can you say with Joshua, "Whatsoever others may do, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord ?" If so, it is well. If not, go study and imitate the example of reliable religion which the conduct of Daniel presents. We are taught by this subject—

Thirdly, *That eminent piety and thorough efficiency in business are not incompatible.* Many persons think that they are so. And what is worse, some people have a notion that personal religion and proficiency in any trade or profession cannot go together. They have an idea that the two things are opposed to each other. They think that a life of faith in Christ, a life of devotedness to God—a life of worship, of prayer, and praise—in which the Scriptures are read and Sabbaths are duly kept, somehow or other unfit a man for his business. That if he will excel in the one, he must fail in the other ; that if he be punctual in his prayers, he will blunder in his business ; that if he read many chapters in the Bible, his ledger will be a chapter of mistakes.

Doubtless there is some ground for this opinion. It is quite true and must at once be conceded that we do not always find piety and skill united. We cannot explain it by referring all to worldly prejudice. Religious people themselves occasionally make the same complaint. And it is confessedly mortifying to see a man stand forth as a professor of religion, obviously want-

ing in faculty, dispatch, adroitness, and general efficiency in his business. A person whose goodness you never doubt, whose prayers you enjoy, but whom you could not thoroughly trust for the display of adequate energy and skill in the management of secular affairs.

i. In relation to this allowed deficiency, it is the least we can say, that it need not be so, as the facts of all ages abundantly prove. Jacob was the devout man who wrestled in prayer with the angel and prevailed. But concerning attention to business, his master Laban confessed, "I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake." Joseph lived, "as seeing him who is invisible." But when Pharaoh wanted to place a man of adequate ability to meet a great crisis in the land of Egypt, "Pharaoh said to his servants, Can we find such an one as this man is, a man in whom the spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, "there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the house will I be greater than thou." Paul had been caught up to the third heaven, sometimes not knowing whether he was in the body or out of the body, yet the tentmaker did not forget his handicraft amid the extatic enjoyments of the apostle; he labours with his hands night and day that he might not be chargeable to any. To mention those also who in modern times have achieved the double fortune of laying up at one and the same time treasure in heaven and treasure on earth, would be to cite some of the most distinguished names among our statesmen, our lawyers, our physicians, our "successful merchants," and tradesmen. Thousands in our own island may be found who happily combine the highest efficiency in the conduct of commercial affairs with marked devotedness to the interests of religion. They realize the truth, that "godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

ii. Moreover, true religion supplies *the highest motives* for the efficient discharge of all duty. It is quite true that any man may find honourable motives for discharging the duties of his station quite apart from considerations of a purely religious character. He may be urged thereto by a desire to avoid embarrassment, to maintain his family, to preserve his reputation, to rise in the world and achieve a fortune. A true Christian feels all these motives to the full, but in addition he comes under the power of other considerations of a kind far nobler, loftier, and more solemn. He is influenced by the thought that all his work passes under "the Great Taskmaster's eye." "The law of his God" becomes his guide, and that law says for his encouragement, "the hand of the diligent maketh rich"—for his warning, that he who neglects to provide for his own, "is worse than an infidel." If he understand the scope and application of Christian principles, he knows that religion must be a life, a habit, a law, affecting all his conduct in every relation he sustains. He serves a master whose jurisdiction comprehends the whole circle of his being, extending not merely to outward acts, but even "to the thoughts and intents of the heart." He knows that it is his gracious and glorious will that the life of his servant should not (as is too often the case) become divided like human history into two parts, into sacred and profane—but that it should rather be regarded as a whole—that all his movements, domestic, social, commercial, and spiritual, should be brought under the ennobling and sanctifying energy of Christian truth. A command has reached him from the heavenly Master, to whom he owes highest allegiance, a command

EFFICIENCY IN BUSINESS NOT INCOMPATIBLE.

never yet altered or repealed, to this effect, "And *whatsoever* ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men." Hence, if we are reminded of cases of marked deficiency in professing Christians respecting the management of common affairs, we not only reply, such things need not be, but they *ought* not to be. A Christian man, of all others, should to be equal to the demands of his position. All the elements of habit and character which go to make up ordinary efficiency, as industry, skill, perseverance, and integrity, should be found in an eminent degree in him.

iii. But we go further. Religion not only places us under the power of mighty motives, it *also supplies in its holy exercises the best preparation* for meeting the claims of our earthly calling. There is a wear and tear of the system incessantly going on, in the pursuit of any trade or profession which demands occasional relief. The wheels of life want oiling. Such relief may be found of course, and well found in change of occupation, in change of scenery, in the fields of literature, amid the joys and harmless recreations of home, amid the pleasures of the social circle, where the tension of the overstrained powers is relaxed, and the soul freely unbends in the intercourse of friendship. But these sources of refreshment are not open to all. Thousands of the sons and daughters of toil find such springs of comfort sealed to them. In vain they sigh, and wait for the inspiration of green field or for the breeze of the fresh blue sea. Nature's beauties are rarely seen by them. But there is a fountain of strength free to all. Daniel knew its power. Amid the cares of office he found relief and stimulus, doubtless in many ways, but he found it chiefly at the throne of grace; in his prayers and regular communings with his God. The prime minister of Darius must have been often occupied with harassing affairs. But at stated intervals the holy man broke through them all, and reached a loftier, calmer region. Three times a-day with his face devoutly turned towards the sanctuary, in Jerusalem, "he kneeled and prayed, and gave thanks before his God." And do you think the moments so spent in fellowship with the Father was lost time to him? Do you think that in consequence, the movements of his mind were less rapid? his perception less keen? his judgment less sound and sure. I trow not. Nay, here was the secret of his strength.

My friend, you have *your* cares and trials. Every day brings its punctual duties which cannot be postponed. Human life grows more artificial and intricate. In business, competition runs high. You live amid "a strife of tongues." You leave your daily avocations weary and worn. You look forward to a morrow which will be a repetition of to-day, and you know not what demands may be made on your activity, patience, sagacity, and strength. Well, murmur not. If you are a good man Daniel's God is yours. If you are a follower of Christ, you have a friend to go to. To him you may repair with your burden and your cares. From him you may get light and joy. You too may retire from the world, rise above its din and toil, "wait upon the Lord, and renew your strength." You may "come boldly to the throne of grace, obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need." From these heights of calm communion you may come down into the busy world below better prepared to meet its thick coming engagements, to bear its manifold provocations, to contend with its difficulties, and successfully to manage its affairs. Our honoured statesman and philanthropist, William Wilberforce, found not only a Sabbath once a week, but in the hour sacred to morning prayer, a Sabbath in each day. These advan-

tages are yours. And hence in view of them, one has a right to say to you as to a Christian, that in regard to all lawful secular engagements, while to be (in commercial phrase) below par is discreditable to any, it is almost inexcusable in you. For happily like your Lord, you "have meat to eat which others know not of." In your management and daily work there should appear at the least the average amount of efficiency and skill. Let us remember that our religion, while it is spiritual, it is practical. Heaven is its origin and home, but earth must be the theatre of its operation and its victories. The common duties of our life and worldly calling furnish the ground on which its excellence and power may be displayed.

Fourthly, *Such a combination reflects honour on religion and materially aids its advance.* It is the misfortune of some to accumulate stumbling blocks on the high road of religion, and as they proceed in life to strew their path with inconsistencies, which become formidable obstacles in the way of upright but worldly men when invited to approach Christ and his church. Manifest discord between the religious profession and the common life, dishonours the name of Christ, creates doubt in the minds of men as to the power of his truth, fills their minds with a false and unfavourable impression of its general influence, and thus tends to strengthen those prejudices already too strong, which prevent their forming a just estimate of a true Christian life.

In this respect we have all to confess manifold deficiencies. We have not placed before the world a fair sample of religion. Let us, however, remember and imitate Daniel's conduct, and we may yet render the cause of Christ important service. Combine thorough efficiency in business with all the exercises of piety, and you will in your own person demonstrate that the two things can co-exist. So doing, you will close the lips of the gainsayer; you will deprive the objector of an argument which he is but too glad to advance. Religion will be saved from a needless slur and encumbrance. By "well doing you will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," and facilitate the influence of the truth over many minds. Deem not the advice needless. Possibly, many into whose hands these words may fall live in houses of commerce and trade; young men, who, like Daniel, are placed over some department of business. And as in Daniel's case so also in yours, some around may watch for your halting, and would rejoice in your fall. Should you fail in discharging the duties of your station, unfriendly minds would impute your failure to your religion—they would not wait to discriminate. Although it would often be far nearer the truth to ascribe such failure to a deficiency of religion and a forgetfulness of its laws. But by God's help you may do as Daniel did; so combining attention to "the things seen and temporal" with attention to "the things unseen and eternal" as to put yourself in a position to say: "find fault they may—I am conscious of many deficiencies—but they shall not discover it in my work—they shall have no just occasion to complain of the manner in which the duties of my situation are discharged. As a Christian I will try to perform them not only as well, but, if possible, a shade better than others. So that, let malice itself, inspect my conduct, let envy itself examine my proceedings, their confession shall be; "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God."

May the Lord, whom we serve, enable us all so to act, for the credit of religion and the glory of his holy name. Amen.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE FORM AND SPIRIT OF RELIGION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 4, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies."—1 Samuel iv. 3.

THESE men made a great mistake: what they wanted was the Lord in their midst; whereas they imagined that the symbol of God's presence, the ark of the covenant, would be amply sufficient to bestow upon them the assistance which they required in the day of battle. As is man, such must his religion be. Now, man is a compound being. To speak correctly, man is a spiritual being: he hath within him a soul, a substance far beyond the bounds of matter. But man is also made up of a body as well as a soul. He is not pure spirit; his spirit is incarnate in flesh and blood. Now, such is our religion. The religion of God is, as to its vitality, purely spiritual—always so; but since man is made of flesh as well as of spirit, it seemed necessary that his religion should have something of the outward, external, and material, in which to embody the spiritual, or else man would not have been able to lay hold upon it. This was especially the case under the old dispensation. The religion of the Jew is really a heavenly and spiritual thing; a thing of thought, a thing that concerns the mind and spirit; but the Jew was untaught; he was but a babe, unable to understand spiritual things unless he saw them pictured out to him, or, (to repeat what I have just said) unless he saw them embodied in some outward type and symbol: and therefore God was pleased to give the Jew a great number of ceremonies, which were to his religion what the body is to man's soul. The Jewish religion taught the doctrine of the atonement, but the Jew could not understand it, and therefore God gave him a lamb to be slain every morning and every evening, and he gave him a goat over which the sins of the people were to be confessed, and which was to be driven into the depths of the wilderness, to show the great doctrine of a substitute and atonement through him. The Jewish religion teaches, as one of its prominent doctrines, the unity of the Godhead; but the Jew was ever apt to forget that there was but one God; and God, to teach him that, would have but one temple, and but one altar upon which the sacrifice might rightly be offered. So that the idea of the one God was (as I have already said) made incarnate in the fact that there was but one temple, but one altar, and but one great high priest. And mark, this is true of our religion—Christianity: not true to so full an extent as of Judaism—for the religion of the Jew had a gross and heavy body—but our religion has a body transparent, and having but little of materialism in it. If you ask me what I would call the materialism of our religion, the embodiment of the spiritual part of that in which we trust and hope, I would point, first of all, to the two ordinances of the Lord, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I would point you next to the services of God's house, to the Sabbath day, to the outward ritual of our worship: I would point you to our solemn song, to our sacred service of prayer; and I would point you also—and I think I am right in so doing—to the form of sound words, which we ever desire to hold fast and firm, as containing that creed which it is necessary for men to believe if they would hold the truth as it is in Jesus. Our religion, then, has an outward form even to this day;

for the apostle Paul, when he spoke of professing Christians, spoke of some who had "a form of godliness, but denied the power thereof." So that it is still true, though I confess not to the same extent as it was in the days of Moses, that religion must have a body, that the spiritual thing may come out palpably before our vision, and that we may see it.

Now, three points this morning inferred from our narrative. The first point is this—that *the outward form of religion is to be carefully and reverently observed.* But my second and most important head is this—you will notice that the very men who have the least of the spirit of religion are the most superstitiously observant of the form of it; just as you find the people here, who did not care for God, had a very superstitious regard for that chest called the ark of the covenant. And then, my third point will be, that *those who trust in the outward form of religion, apart from the spirit of it, are fearfully deceived, and the result of their deception must be of the most fatal character.* The first point I feel is necessary, lest I should lead any to despise the form of religion, while endeavouring to insist upon the absolute necessity of attending in the first place to the spirit of it.

I. In the first place then, THE FORM OF RELIGION IS TO BE REVERENTLY OBSERVED. This ark of the covenant was with the Jew the most sacred instrument of his religion. There were many other things which he held holy; but this ark always stood in the most holy place, and it was rendered doubly sacred, because, between the outstretched wings of those cherubic figures that rested upon the mercy-seat, there was usually to be seen a bright light, called the Shekinah, which manifested that Jehovah, the God of Israel, who dwelt between the cherubims, was there. And, indeed, they had great reason in the days of Samuel to reverence this ark, for you will recollect that when Moses went to war with the Midianites, a great slaughter of that people was occasioned by the fact that Eleazar, the high priest, with a silver trumpet, stood in the forefront of the battle, bearing in his hands the holy instrument of the law—that is, the ark; and it was by the presence of this ark that the victory was achieved. It was by this ark, too, that the river Jordan was dried up. When the tribes came to it, there was no ford, but the priests put the staves of the ark upon their shoulders, and they marched with solemn pace down to the waters' edge, and before the presence of the ark the waters receded, so that the people went through dry-shod. And when they had landed in the promised country, you remember it was by this ark that the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground; for the priests, blowing the trumpets and carrying the ark, went before, when they compassed the city seven days, and at last, by the power of the ark, or rather by the power of that God who dwelt within the ark, the walls of Jericho fell flat down, and every man went straight up to the slaughter. These people, therefore, thought if they could once get the ark, it would be all right, and they would be sure to triumph; and, while I shall have in the second head, to insist upon it that they were wrong in superstitiously imputing strength to the poor chest, yet the ark was to be reverently observed, for it was the outward symbol of a high spiritual truth, and it was never to be treated with any indignity.

It is quite certain, in the first place, that *the form of religion must never be altered.* You remember that this ark was made by Moses, according to the pattern that God had given him in the mount. Now, the outward forms of our religion, if they be correct, are made by God. His two great ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are sent for us from on high. I dare not alter either of them. I should think it a high sin and treason against heaven, if, believing that baptism signifieth immersion, and immersion only, I should pretend to administer it by sprinkling; or, believing that baptism appertaineth to believers only, I should consider myself a criminal in the sight of God if I should give it to any but those who believe. Even so with the Lord's Supper. Believing that it consists of bread and wine, I hold it to be highly blasphemous in the Church of Rome to withhold the cup from the people; and knowing that this ordinance was intended for the Lord's people only, I consider it an act of high treason against the Majesty of Heaven, when any are admitted to the Lord's Supper who have not made a profession of their faith and of their repentance, and who do not declare themselves to be the true children of God. And with regard to the doctrines of the Gospel, no alteration must be allowed here. I know that forms of doctrine are very little, compared with the spirit and the heart; but still we must not alter even the form of it. It has often been said, that we ought not to have a strict religion. I believe that is just the very thing we ought to have: a religion that is of such a cast that it does not know how to alter;

a religion that comes from the Infallible Head of the Church, that is, Jesus Christ our Lord, and which to the latest time is to be like the Law and the Prophets—not one jot or tittle of it must fall while the earth endureth. The men who think that we may alter this and alter that, and still maintain the spirit of religion, have some truth on their side; but let them remember, that while the spirit of religion may be maintained in the midst of many errors, yet every error tends to weaken our spirituality. And, beside that, we have no right to consider the effect upon ourselves merely. Whatever form of religion God has ordained, it is ours to practise without the slightest alteration; and to alter any one of the ordinances of God is an act of dire profanation; however reasonable that alteration may seem to be, it is treason against high heaven, and is not to be permitted in the Church of Christ. "Hold fast the form of sound words," said Paul, "which thou hast heard of me;" or, as I remember to have said before, while the form of religion is not power, yet unless the form be carefully observed, it is not easy to maintain the power. It is like an egg-shell enclosing the egg; there is no life in the *shell*, but you must take care you do not crack it, or else you may destroy the life within. The ordinances and doctrines of our faith are only the shell of religion—they are not the life; but we must take care that we do not hurt so much as the outward shell, for if we do, we may endanger the life within; though that may manage to live, it must be weakened by any injury done to the outward form thereof.

And as the form must not be altered, so it *must not be despised*. These Philistines despised the ark. They took it and set it in their idol temple, and the result was that their idol god, Dagon, was broken in pieces. They then sent it through their cities, and they were smitten with emerods. And then, being afraid to put it within walls, they set it in the open country, and they were invaded with mice, so that everything was eaten up. God would not have any dishonour put even upon the outward form of his religion; he would have men reverently take care that they did no dishonour even to his ark: it might be nothing but gopher-wood, but because, between the wings of those cherubim God had dwelt, the ark was to be held sacred, and God would not have it dishonoured. Take care, ye that despise God, lest ye despise his outward ordinances. To laugh at the Sabbath, to despise the ordinances of God's House, to neglect the means of grace, to call the outward form of religion a vain thing—all this is highly offensive in the sight of God. He will have us remember that while the form is not the life, yet the form is to be respected for the sake of the life which it contains; the body is to be venerated for the sake of the inward soul; and, as I would have no man maim my body, even though in maiming it he might not be able to wound my soul, so God would have no man maim the outward parts of religion, although it is true no man can touch the real vitality of it.

Yet one more remark, and that a very solemn one. As the outward form is neither to be altered nor despised, so neither is it to be *intruded upon by unworthy persons*. You remember that this ark of the covenant, after it was brought back from the land of the Philistines, was set in the field of Joshua the Bethshemite, and the Bethshemites took off the lid, and looked into the ark of the Lord, and, for this, the Lord "smote of that people fifty thousand and three-score and ten men; and the people lamented because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter." These Bethshemites had no intention whatever of dishonouring the ark. They had a vain curiosity to look within, and the sight of those marvellous tables of stone struck them with death; for the law, when it is not covered by the mercy-seat, is death to any man, and it was death to them. Now, you will easily remember how very solemn a penalty is attached to any man's intruding into the outward form of religion when he is not called to do so. Let me quote this awful passage: "He" (speaking of the Lord's Supper) "that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." How frightful an announcement is that! A curse is pronounced upon the man who dares to touch even the outward form of religion, unless he hath the power of it; and we know there is nothing which excites God's holy anger more swiftly than a man's attending to the ordinances of his house and making an outward profession of being in Christ, while he has no part nor lot in the matter. Oh, take heed. The outward ordinances of Christ are not the vitality of religion, but nevertheless they are so solemnly important, that we must neither alter nor despise them, nor rush into them without being invited; for if we

do so, the curse of God must light upon us for having despised the holy thing of the Most High God of Israel.

And now, before I close this first head, let me remark, that *the outward things of God are to be diligently cared for and loved.* We have in our reading had two instances of that. There was holy Eli: he knew very well that the ark of God was not God; he understood that it was but the outward sign of the inward and spiritual; yet when the ark of God was taken, mark the poor old man's trouble: his heart broke, and then he fell down and broke his neck. Then there was that nameless woman. Her husband was the priest who attended to this very ark, but he was a man whose character I cannot describe better than by saying that he was a son of Belial. It is hard for a woman to believe religion if she has a minister for her husband who is profane and wicked. This woman's husband not only committed wrongs against God, but against her. He was a filthy and unclean person, who polluted the very courts of the Lord's house with his fornications; and yet she had such faith in her God, that she knew how to love the religion which her husband, by his awful character, brought into disrepute. She knew how to distinguish between the man and his duty, between the priest and the priesthood, between the officer and the office. I do wonder at her. I am sure there is nothing that staggers our faith like seeing a minister walking inconsistently; but this man was the chief minister, and her own husband, living in known sin, and a sin which came home to her, because he sinned against her. I am sure it was wonderful that she believed at all; but so strong was her faith and attachment to her religion, that though, like Eli, she knew that the ark was not God, that the form was not the inward thing, yet the form itself was so precious to her, that the pangs of child-birth were hurried on prematurely, and in the midst of her pain, this still was uppermost—that the ark of the Lord was taken. It was in vain to cheer her with the news that her child was born; it was an idle tale to her, and she rejoiced not in it. She lay in a swoon; but at last, opening her eyes, and remembering that her husband was dead, and that therefore, according to Jewish usage, it was her duty to give the child a name, she faintly opened her lips before she died, and said, "Call his name Inglorious (Ichabod) for the glory is departed;" and then she added this reason for it: she did not say, "because my husband is dead," though she loved him; she did not say, "because my father-in-law, Eli, is dead," or "because my nation has been defeated," but she added that all-significant reason, "because the ark of the Lord was taken;" and she died. Oh, I would to God that we all loved God's house, and loved the ways of God, and the ordinances of God, as much as she did. While we attach no superstitious importance to the outward ceremony, I wish we thought as much of holy things, because of the Holy One of Israel, as did Eli, and this nameless, but noble woman.

Thus I have preached upon the first head, and no ceremonialist here, I am sure, can differ from me, for they must all say it is true. Even the Puseyite will confess that this is just what he believes—that ceremonies ought to be carefully observed. But I shall not agree with Mr. Puseyite in the second head.

II. Now, it is a notorious fact, that **THE VERY MEN WHO HAVE THE LEAST IDEA OF WHAT SPIRITUAL RELIGION IS, ARE THE MEN WHO PAY THE MOST SUPERSTITIOUS ATTENTION TO OUTWARD FORMS.** We refer you again to this instance. These people would neither repent, nor pray, nor seek God and his prophets; yet they sought out this ark and trusted in it with superstitious veneration. Now, in every country where there has been any religion at all that is true, the great fact has come out very plainly, that the people who don't know anything about true religion, have always been the most careful about the forms. Do you want to know the man who used to swallow widows' houses, and devour the patrimonies of the fatherless? Do you want to know the hypocrites, the deceivers, in the days of Christ? Why, they were the Pharisees, who "for a show made long prayers;" they were the men who gave alms to the poor in the corners of the street—the men that tithed the anise, and the mint, and the cummin, and forgot the weightier matters of the law, such as justice and righteousness. If you wanted to find the seducer, the unjust judge, the liar, the perjured man, in the days of Christ, you had only to ask for the man who had fasted thrice in the week, and gave tithes of all he possessed. These Pharisees would do any wicked action, and never stick at it; yet, if in drinking wine a small gnat should have fallen in and been swallowed with it, they would consider themselves defiled, because their law did not allow

them to eat a creature from which the blood had not been withdrawn. Thus they strained at the gnat, thus getting the reputation of being very religious, and swallowed the camel, hump and all. You smile; but what they did in their day is done now. You know the Romanists; did you ever know one of them who would not think it to be a very high offence against the Majesty of Heaven, if he were to eat any meat on Good Friday? Do you know anyone of them who did not think it necessary to keep Lent with strict punctillious observance? Notice how carefully they go to their places of worship on the Sabbath morning, how diligently they observe that sacred rite of crossing their foreheads with holy water. How necessary it is, that the holy water and everything else of the same kind, should be tenderly cared for. And do not the same persons in their own countries keep their theatres open on the Sabbath day? Do you not find the very men, who are so solemnly observant of their religion in the morning, forgetting it all in the evening; thinking no more of the Sabbath, which they call holy, than if it were any other day, but making it more a day of merriment than any day of the week? Look again at our Church of England; God be thanked that there are so many true Evangelical men in the midst of it; but there are certain sections there to whom my remarks will apply. Do you want to know the men who know nothing at all about the new birth, who do not know what it is to be justified by faith, who have not a spark of religion? Do you know where to find them? They are the men that never said their creed without turning their heads the right way, that never said the name of Jesus without bowing their heads most reverently; they are the men who always take care that the church should be builded so as to be a goodly edifice, in order that the parishioners going there may see the glory of God in the glory of his house; they are the people who mark every red letter day, who take care that every rubric is attended to, who think that holly on Christmas is a most heavenly thing, and a few flowers upon the altar almost equal to the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon. These are the gentlemen who could no more preach without a cassock than they could live without a head. Of course they have not any religion at all, and because the inner life is clean gone, evaporated, dissipated, they have to be so extremely particular that they observe the outward form of it. I know many Evangelical Churchmen (and they are generally precise enough) that would break through every form. I could point you out this morning some two or three clergymen of the Church of England who are heretical enough to be sitting here and listening to the words of one who is a Dissenter, and of course a Schismatic, but who would no more think of calling me a Schismatic than they would think of flying, and would give me the right hand of fellowship with all their hearts. I believe that many of them would forget the rubrics if they could, and, if it were in their power, would cut their catechism all to pieces, and turn half of their church prayer-book out of doors. And these are the men that have most religion; they care least about the form, but they have most of the grace within; they have more true religion, more evangelism, more of the grace of God in their hearts, than fifty of their Puseyite brethren.

But let me come to Dissenters, for we are just as bad. I must deal with all alike. We have among us a certain class of people, a sort of dissenting Puseyites, Where the Puseyite thinks it necessary to keep Good Friday and Easter Sunday, these good brethren take as much care to keep holy day the wrong way, as the others the right way. They think it would be a grievous sin to go to chapel on Good Friday, and they are solemnly in earnest that they should never break the law of the church not to observe holy days. To them it is a very sacred thing that they should always be found in their chapel twice on the Sunday; they think it highly necessary that they should have their children baptized, or that they should be baptized themselves, and that they should take the Lord's Supper. That is all well and good; but alas! we must confess it, there are some among us who, if they are orthodox in their opinions and precise in their outward practice, are quite content to be utterly destitute of the power of religion. I must deal faithfully with all. I know in all our dissenting denominations there are to be found many self-righteous persons, who have not any religion at all, but who are the most precise people in all the world to stick up for the outward form of it. Do you not know some old member of the church here and there? Well, you say, if anybody in the church is a hypocrite, I should say that old So-and-so is one. If you were to propose any alteration in anything, oh! how these gentlemen would bristle up; how they would draw their swords. They! they love every nail in the chapel door,

they would not have a different colour for the pulpit for the world. They will have everything strictly observed. Their whole salvation seems to depend upon the rightness of the form. Oh no, not they; they could not think of altering any of the forms of their church. You know it is quite as easy for a man to trust in ceremonials, when they are severely simple, as for a man to rely upon them when they are gorgeous and superb. A man may as much trust in the simple ordinance of immersion and the breaking of bread, as another may trust in the high mass and in the prayers of priests. We may have Rome in Dissent, and Rome in the Church of England, and Rome anywhere; for wherever there is a trust in ceremonies, there is the essence of Popery, there is anti-Christ and the man of sin. Oh! take heed of this any of you who have been relying upon your ceremonies. This is just the truth, that the more zeal for ceremonies, generally the less power of vital godliness within. But now, how is it that the man who would not eat anything but salt-fish on Good Friday, cheats his neighbour on Saturday? How is it that the man who never would by any means go to anything but an orthodox sixteen-ounces-to-the-pound Baptist Chapel, can be found committing acts of injustice in his daily business, and perhaps more filthy deeds still? I will tell you, the man feels he must have some righteousness or other, and when he knows himself to be a good-for-nothing rascal, he feels he has not got a moral righteousness, and therefore he tries to get a ceremonial one. Mark the man that drinks and swears, that commits all kinds of iniquity, and you will very often find him (I have known such cases) the most superstitiously reverent man that can be found. He would not go inside a place of worship without taking his hat off immediately. He will curse and swear outside, perhaps, and it never pricks his conscience; but to walk up the aisle of a church with his hat on—oh! how frightful. He feels, if he did so, he would be lost for ever. He would not forget to tithe the mint, anise, and cummin, but all the while the weightier matters of the law are left totally unregarded. Another reason is, because a religion of ceremonies is so much easier than true religion. To say *Ave Marias* and *Pater Nosters* is easy enough; you may soon get it over, and it does not check the conscience much. To go to chapel twice on the Sunday—there is nothing very hard in that. It is not half so hard as turning to the Lord with full purpose of heart. It is not half so hard as breaking off one's sin by righteousness, and putting one's trust in Christ Jesus alone. Therefore, because the thing is so easy, people like it better. Again, it is so complimentary. When the Romanist beats his back, and flogs his flesh, why is it that he likes that better than the simple gospel, "Believe and live?" Why, because it just flatters his pride. He thinks he is beating the devil out of himself, but he is in reality beating him in—the devil of pride is coming in. He whispers, "Ah! you are a good man to have flogged yourself like that! you will carry yourself to heaven by the merit of your wounds and bruises." Poor human nature always like that. In fact, the more exacting a religion is, the better people like it. The more religion ties you up, and binds you, if it does not touch the heart, the better people like to carry it out. Hindooism has its great hold upon the people, because they can get a great stock of merit by walking with spikes in their shoes; or rolling themselves many thousands of miles, or drinking the filthy waters of the Ganges, or offering themselves to die. All these things please human nature. "Believe and live" is too humbling; to trust alone in Christ casts down man's high looks; therefore man says, "Away with it!" and he turns to anything rather than to Christ.

Besides, there is another reason. Men always like the religion of ceremonies, because it does not need the giving up of their favourite sins. "Why," says a man, "if all that is needed for me to be saved, is to have the Sacrament given me by the priest when I come to die, what a delightful religion that is! I can drink, swear, and do just as I like. I have nothing to do but to get greased at last with holy oil, and off I go to heaven with all my sins about me." Says another, "We can have all our gaities and frivolities, all the pomp of life and the pride of flesh; all that we need is to get confirmed; then, afterwards, sometimes to go to church, take a handsomely bound prayer-book and Bible, be very attentive and observant, and the bishop will no doubt set us all right." This just suits many men, because there is no trouble about it. They can keep on with their gaities and with their sins, and yet they believe they can go to heaven with them. Men do not like that old-fashioned gospel which tells them that sin and the sinner must part, or else they must be damned. They do not like to be told that without holiness no man shall

see the Lord, and that old-fashioned text, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," will never be palatable to human nature. Human nature does not mind what you tell it to do, so long as you do not tell it to believe. You may tell it to observe this, that, and the other, and the man will do it, and thank you, and the harder it is, the better he will like you; but once tell him, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Believe on him and thou shalt be saved," his pride is all up at once; he cannot endure it, and he hates the man that preaches it to him, and drives the very thought of the gospel from his soul.

III. And now, in the last place, it is mine to warn you that to TRUST IN CEREMONIES IS A MOST DECEITFUL THING, AND WILL END IN THE MOST TERRIFIC CONSEQUENCES. When these people had got the ark into the camp, they shouted for joy, because they thought themselves quite safe; but, alas, they met with a greater defeat than before. Only four thousand men had been killed in the first battle, but in the second, thirty thousand footmen of Israel fell down dead. How vain are the hopes that men build upon their good works, and ceremonial observances! How frightful is that delusion which teaches for the gospel a thing which is not "the gospel," nor "another gospel," but it is a thing that would pervert the gospel of Christ. My hearer, let me ask thee solemnly, what is thy ground of hope? Dost thou rely on baptism? O man, how foolish art thou! What can a few drops of water, put upon an infant's forehead, do? Some lying hypocrites tell us that children are regenerated by drops of water. What kind of regeneration is that? We have seen people hanged that were regenerated in this fashion. There have been men that have lived all their lives whoremongers, adulterers, thieves, and murderers, who have been regenerated in their baptism by that kind of regeneration. Oh, be not deceived by a regeneration so absurd, so palpable even to flesh and blood, as one of the lying wonders that have come from hell itself. But mayhap thou sayest, "Sir, I rely upon my baptism, in after life." Ah, my friends, what can washing in water do? As the Lord liveth, if thou trustest in baptism thou trustest in a thing that will fail thee at last. For what is washing in water, unless it is preceded by faith and repentance? We baptize you, not in order to wash away your sins, but because we believe they are washed away beforehand; and if we did not think you believed so, we would not admit you to a participation in that ordinance. But if you will pervert this to your own destruction, by trusting in it, take heed; you are warned this morning. For as "circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," so baptism availeth nothing.

I may have some here who are saying within themselves, "Well, if I do not go to heaven, nobody will, for I have been brought up to my church as regularly as possible; I was regularly confirmed: my godfathers and godmothers stood for me in my childhood, and all after the right fashion. I have come here, it is true, but it is about the first offence I ever committed, coming into this Schismatic conventicle; if it please God to forgive, I will never do so again. I always go to church, and I have no doubt that by taking the Sacrament and saying my prayers I shall go to heaven." Ah! you are awfully deceived, for unless you are born again you must come back to the old standard after all—unless you are in blessed union with the Lamb, unless you have found repentance for sin, unless you have true living faith in the Lord Jesus, you may keep all these things, you may observe every jot and tittle, but the gates of heaven must be shut in your face, and "depart from me, I never knew you," must be your doom, even though you reply, "Thou hast eaten and drunken in our streets, and we have listened to thy voice." No, my friends, be ye Presbyterians, Episcopalians, or Dissenters, it matters not, ye have your ceremonies; and there are some among us that rely upon them. This one truth cuts at the root of us all. If this be our hope, it is a foul delusion. We must have faith in Jesus, we must have the new heart and the right spirit; no outward forms can make us clean. The leprosy lies deep within; and unless there be an inward work, no outward work can ever satisfy God, and give us an entrance into Paradise.

But before I close, there is one thing I want you to notice, and that is, that *this ark not only could not give victory to Israel, but it could not preserve the lives of the priests themselves who carried it*. This is a fatal blow to all who trust in the forms of religion. What would the Romanist think, if I should tell him that his outward forms can never save him; and how would he grind his teeth if I were to tell him, as I do, that the outward forms can never save his priest, for his priest and he

must be lost together unless they have some better trust than this! But we have even in Protestant churches too much priestcraft. People say, "Well, if the Gospel does not save me, I am confident of the salvation of my minister." Rest assured that he that serveth at God's altar is no more secure from destruction, unless he hath a living faith in Christ, than you yourselves. Hophni and Phinehas are slain, and so must every priest be if he relies on ceremonies himself or teaches others to do so. I cannot imagine a more frightful death-bed than that of a man who has been a priest—I mean a man who has taught others to trust in ceremonies. When he is buried, it will be said of him that he died in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection; but oh! the moment after death, when he opens his eyes to see his delusion! while he was on earth he was fool enough to think that drops of water could save him, that a piece of bread and a cup of wine could renew his heart, and save his soul, but when he gets into another world he will lose this folly, and then will the thought flash upon him, like a lightning flash, writhing his soul with misery—Ah! I am destitute of the one thing needful; I had no love to Christ, I never had that repentance which needed not to be repented of; I never fled to Jesus, and now I know that that hymn is true—

"Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise the soul to heaven."

Oh! how frightful then afterwards to meet his parishioners, to see those to whom he has preached, and to be howled at through the pit by the men whom he was the instrument of destroying, by telling them to trust in a rotten foundation. Let me free myself from any such fear as that. As the Lord my God liveth before whom I stand this day—man, woman, my brother, my sister, in the race of Adam, if thou reliest on anything short of the blood of Jesus Christ, thou trustest in a lie; and if thy salvation ends in anything short of a thorough change of heart, if it makes thee anything less than a new creature in Christ Jesus, the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself upon it, thou hast a religion which is not equal to the necessities of thy case, and when thou needest it most, it will reel beneath thy feet and leave thee without a standing place whereon to rest, overwhelmed with dismay and overcome by despair.

Now, before I send you away, let me make this last remark. I hear one say, "Sir, I renounce all trust in good works and ceremonies. Tell me how can I be saved?" The way is simply this. Our sins deserve punishment; God must and will punish sin; Jesus Christ came into this world and was punished in the room, place, and stead of all that believe on him. Your business, then, this morning is to make this inquiry, Do I want a Saviour? Do I feel that I want him? And my business, if you answer that question aright is to say, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart, and thou shalt be saved.

Ah! there is one in heaven to-day, I firmly believe, who was always a worshipper in this place, and at New Park Street—a young man who was led here to listen to the gospel, and was converted to God; and last Sabbath morning was caught away to heaven in the burning house at Bloomsbury—one of those young men who was taken out of the ruins, one who had been brought to a knowledge of the truth here. It is stated in some of the papers, that his mother was far from a religious woman, and was somewhat given to drink; he had to struggle with some temptation and opposition, but he was enabled to hold on his way, and then, in such an hour as he thought not, the Son of Man came for him, and caught him to himself in the midst of flames and crashing timbers and the uprising of smoke. Oh! I may have one here, that, ere another Sabbath morning comes, may be launched into eternity, if not by the same deplorable process, yet in as hasty a manner; and as my soul rejoices over that young man, to think that God should have honoured me in bringing him to Christ before he took him up to heaven, I must lament that there are any of you in a peril so frightful, as to be living without God, without Christ, without a hope of heaven; to have death hanging over you, and yet not to tremble at it. Oh! this morning I beseech you, close with Christ. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, while his wrath is kindled but a little: for blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

COMFORT IN TROUBLE

A Sermon

PREACHED ON WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, 7TH APRIL, 1858,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

IN A LARGE BUILDING ERECTED FOR THE PURPOSE, WITHIN THE
PIECE HALL, HALIFAX.

RELYING upon the promised help of God's most Holy Spirit, I shall endeavour to address myself, this afternoon, principally to those who are sad at heart and sorrowful in spirit, and who have need of comfort.

You know, when the pilgrims reached the Delectable Mountains, the shepherds came forth to them and said, "Come in, Mr. Fearing; come in, Mr. Ready-to-Halt; come in, Mr. Much Afraid; come in Mr. Despondency;" and they added some short words of comfort to cheer their hearts as they entered the shepherd's tent. But they very pithily said, "As for you, Mr. Greathheart, and you, Father Honest, we do not give you an invitation, though you are thoroughly welcome; for you are strong, and can take care of yourselves." I would act in the same spirit this afternoon; and while I know that those who are "strong in faith, giving glory to God," will be able to take for themselves comfort from God's most holy Word, I would turn especially to those whose faith wavers, and whose troubles are increased, and would say unto such, "Come in; rejoice in the promises; feed upon the rich things of God's Word, and make yourselves joyful in God." And in addressing myself to these characters, I have selected for them a text, which I think will be expressive of their peculiar condition: they are saying, perhaps, in the words of the Psalmist, "My soul is full of troubles; my life draweth nigh unto the grave." It may be, they have made use of these very words; but if not, they are sufficiently applicable to allow me to ground upon them some words of comfort.

And now, thou heir of mourning—thou child of woe! permit me, first of all, to describe the state in which thou now art found; then, in the second place, let me try to find out how it is thou hast come into so awful a condition; and, in the third place, let me endeavour to help thee out, that thou mayest find joy and consolation, and no more hang thy head like a bulrush.

In the first instance, then, let me describe the condition of those persons who are mourning and sorrowing. And I will commence with this remark—your condition to-day is a very general one; you are doubting, distressed, desponding; and you imagine that none other ever felt as you are feeling now. The self-conceit of misery is leading you to believe that you are one of the peers in the realm of woe; or, perhaps, you have even climbed the throne, and, putting the crown upon your own head, you have declared yourself to be the king of the realms of misery. "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of Thine hand: behold, and see, was there ever sorrow like unto my sorrow?" My remark, then, will strike at your pride; but, at the same time, will afford you consolation. Your sorrows are not singular ones; others are enduring the same. The valley which you are now treading has been trodden by many feet before you entered it: your woes and agonies are no strange things, they have happened unto your fellow-men long beforetime; and if to none else, they have certainly happened to your Master, for "He was tempted in all points like as you are, yet without sin." Perhaps nothing has a greater power to comfort the mourner than to let him remember that others are in the same condition. Thou art not alone, oh mourner, however bad thy case; others suffer as thou, dost suffer. Indeed, so common is the case that I am about to describe—the case of a man under despondency of spirit—that I may safely remark, there is never a Christian who, some time or other, has not felt and said the same. You have looked

up to the good deacon ; you have heard him pray very sweetly, and have said, " Ah, if I could only pray like that man, I should never have a doubt ! " You have listened to your minister when he has preached boldly concerning the " good things of the kingdom," and you have said, " Ah, if I only had the spirit of our minister, I should never have a despondency or a fear ! " It is because you know nothing about it that you thus speak : he who can comfort you needs to be comforted himself ; for many are they who, like Job, do comfort others, but " when it cometh upon them, they tremble ; and when it toucheth them, they are sore afraid." Believe me when I say that God's wisest men are blown like the ashes by every gust of wind ; and it is as much as even Great Faith himself can do sometimes to hold his own, and to believe that he has any part or lot in the matter of the kingdom of God.

But I shall give you very poor comfort when I make the next announcement. Not only is this case very common, but it is very frequent to the same person. If you get out of your doubts and fears to-day, don't flatter yourself that you are out of the wood yet ; don't begin to shout too soon, and say that you will never have any despondencies again. Uphill and downhill is the road to heaven ; sometimes we get to Pisgah's top, " and view the landscape o'er," and think we have faith enough to leap to heaven at one spring ; but, anon, we go down into the depths of the valleys, and the thunder-clouds brood over our heads, and sometimes empty themselves in tempest over our poor, quivering frames, and then we have not faith enough to do more than lay down and die. I know the young Christian always fancies, after he has got over his first trouble, that he will never have another ; after he has picked his way pretty well through the slough of despondency, he thinks there will not be any more betwixt this place and heaven. If John Bunyan had put fifty sloughs betwixt the wicket-gate and the river of death, he would not have put too many, for these are quite as many as that. You must expect, many a time through life, to be cast down, and cry, " I sink down in deep mire, where there is no standing : I sink down into deep waters, where the floods overflow me : send down, O God, and deliver my soul ; " for the righteous *scarcely* are saved ; and their own experience is the best exposition of the difficulties of the way by which they reach heaven. But will you please to recollect that there is nothing surprising in the fact that a man is often desponding when he is going to heaven—a man cannot be anything in this world without sometimes being put to the right-about, and being made to feel that he can do little or nothing. Ask the wealthy merchant—he who has last accumulated a princely fortune—ask him whether he ever had a season of despondency while he was trying to grow rich ; and he tells you, " Yes, dozens of times ; " often his fortune has trembled in the balance and frequently it was " make or break " with him, bankruptcy or great success. Ask the politician, too, whether he found it easy work to win fame ; and he will tell you, " No ; " often his election has been, as it were, cast on the throw of a die—whether to be prosperous and ride through the world on the wings of applause, or to be disgraced and covered with infamy, he could not tell. He tried to do the right thing for success ; but how the right thing would act he did not know. Ask the engineer whether he ever discovered any great thing without a world of despondency ; and he will tell you how he sat up night after night, until his brain became racked, and he has said to himself, " Ah, I have got it ; " and again, " No, I have not ; " he has discovered some small flaw, and has been again and again disappointed. He tries once more ; this time he invests all his little earnings in making a model of his machine. He knows it is good ; but he can get no one to take it off him, no one to help him ; and the very man who afterwards becomes the greatest of his time in engineering, is sometimes fain to make his account with the mire of the streets, because he thinks he will not succeed. And seeing all this, is there to be no trouble in ascending that holy hill, that " hill of God which is a high hill, even as the hill of Bashan ? " Must we fight for a crown of earth, and are we to win the crown of heaven without battle ? Must we be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease ? Certainly not. Despondency and doubt, trouble and dismay, must overtake us, for before success there must come tribulation. So you see there is no wonder that the Christian man is sometimes cast down—no marvel that in so great a work, with such a little strength of our own, we should sometimes fear lest victory should never be ours !

But now I will try if I cannot find out exactly what your case is, and I wonder whether I shall hit upon it. It was only a few weeks ago that a city missionary, going through the west of London, discovered a fact which has supplied me with a memorable anecdote. I know it to be true, and I believe that God the Holy

Spirit directed my mind at the time to say that which was so pertinent to the poor man's case. This missionary called one day at a cobbler's shop, and found him sitting reading some sermons. So the missionary, wishing to have a talk with him, said, "Do you know Mr. Spurgeon?" "Yes," he replied, "I do, I have good reason to know him, for he has been the means of bringing me to know the Lord Jesus Christ; but (he added) it was in a very queer way he went about it; you'll hardly believe me when I tell you. One Sunday morning, I thought to myself, I'll go and hear this queer fellow; they say he says some very odd things. Therefore, off I went to the Surrey Gardens, and sat right in front of him. Well, if he didn't say, 'There's a man there, who's a shoemaker; he keeps his shop open on the Sunday, and last Sunday he sold goods that came to the value of ninepence, and there was fourpence profit out of it!' Well, said he, that was just what I did sell; I sold a pair of children's shoes for ninepence, and fourpence was just the profit! So I thought, he must either be a very bad man, or God had spoken to him; and I went home very much frightened. Next Sunday, I'll go again, but I won't give him such a chance as this." So up he went into the top gallery, where no eye could see him, certainly; and left his girl at home to open the shop. "But when I got up there," he continued, "he calls out to me, 'Ah, sinning by proxy is just as bad as sinning yourself—it's of no use any of you coming yourselves, and at the same time leaving your daughters to keep shop!' "There now, I said to myself, that's God who is surely speaking to me; and I shook from head to foot, and went home, and confessed my sins; and I trust, that by the good aid of the Holy Spirit, I will become a new man. But, sir," he added, "I shall never cease to wonder, as long as I live, how it was that God should have used such a strange instrumentality in bringing me unto Himself."—Now, my friends, if your case should be hit off this afternoon, will you be so good as to take comfort, and hope that God has spoken to you?

Now, what is your trouble? One of you says, "Well, the fact is, I am afraid that I am not one of God's elect; that is *my* trouble. I have been a long time praying and hoping; now what will become of me?" This is a very common fear. A young man had that fear when first seeking the Saviour, and he went to a minister who, after hearing what he had to say, gave him what he considered very excellent advice. "Young man, you have nothing whatever to do with the doctrine of election." But this was not satisfactory, and he determined not to patronise him again; arguing, "if I go to consult a dentist, and he should reply, 'Young man, you have nothing to do with the tooth or toothache, you ought not to think about it,' I should say, 'Well, but that is it which aches, and which needs extracting.'" So with this election doctrine—it troubles many people; and it is no use our saying, You have nothing to do with it; it is our business to try and extract the difficulty. And that is very easy to do. Will you answer me one question, you who are troubled on this point? Dost thou believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all thine heart? Dost thou say yes? Then thou art as much elect as the spirits before the throne.

Another one says, "Well, sir, that is not my trouble. I am afraid that I do not come to Christ in the right way when I come to Him." Now that is a trouble which you never need have. Did you come to Jesus Christ at all? Because, if so, you came the right way. There is no such thing as coming to Christ the wrong way, for "no man can come except the Father draw him," and the Father never draws anybody by mistake. If you are made to come, it is the result of Divine drawing; and you may depend upon it you have come the right way.

"But," says another, "I am troubled, because my experience is not like so-and-so's." I know you take in a twopenny magazine—do you not?—one that has in it every month a biography of some very good (and sometimes very suspicious) man or woman, who is extolled to the skies without any very great reason. You read them, and you say, "Well, I don't know how it is, I am sure; I do not feel as this good man or woman felt, and therefore I cannot be right." Believe me, you have no cause for fear on that score. If you go home, you will find on your drawing-room walls or parlour carpet a whole lot of roses and lilies (if that happens to be the fashion.) You may count fifty of them, all alike—the same green leaves, the same hues, and all exactly like each other. Go into your garden after that, and try if you can find fifty there like each other, or even two. You could not pick out a couple that are marked precisely alike. The reason is just this: thoset hat are alike are artificial, whilst the real always differ. So it is with God's church. God is a lover of variety. Although the experience of God's children will always agree in the main, just as the bones of any man will agree with the bones of another man; yet they never do agree

in the minutiae; just as each of our faces is differently formed, we are all diverse and distinct in the filling up of the human frame; and so we are in our experience. If I could believe that my experience were, in every jot and tittle, like—aye, like even that of the Apostle Paul, I should conclude myself a hypocrite; for if I were just like another man, contending as I do that God never did make two of the same sort, I should view myself as a counterfeit. In the filling up of the inner life there are always great diversities. Do not let that trouble you, then, for there is no great cause for fear there.

"Ah, but," says another, "my dear sir, I cannot repent enough." This is a very common fear, and a very rational fear, too; for, at the very outset, let me say concerning it, "You are quite right in your suspicion, you have not repented enough; no man in the world ever did repent enough. If we were to keep on repenting throughout all eternity, we should never sufficiently repent for the great sins we have committed against so kind a God. "Could my tears for ever flow,"—could all the clouds, and floods, and rains dwell in my eyes, that I might weep them out in tears, I could never weep enough on account of the guilt of sin. "Nay, nay," says the man, "that is not what I meant; I meant that I could not repent enough to prove that I was a child of God." Now, mark, repentance is not to be measured by the quantity, but by the quality. It is like faith: when we begin to be Christians, our faith is very little, and then it grows and increases; but he that has little faith is quite as sure of heaven as he that has the greatest faith.

"The strong, the feeble, and the weak
Are safe in Jesus now."

And they are safe alike, nor shall any of them perish. God will not suffer even the least of His people to be lost, and cast eternally away from His presence. The question you have to answer is this, do you repent at all?—is that repentance sincere and genuine? For if with all your heart you do abhor sin, make confession, and seek to avoid it, you need not fear; but as a little genuine grace insures the death of all your sins, so this little repentance shall go on increasing and increasing, from the brook to the river, till at last, in one great sea of repentance, it shall cover your sins, and the Saviour's blood shall cover it, and so shall your sins be completely buried.

It is very likely I have not yet struck on the peculiar case of some person sitting far away in the back throne, who is much exercised in mind. "Oh, sir," says he, "my trouble is—I am afraid I am a hypocrite." I have met with dozens of persons who say this of themselves. If a man comes to you on business, and says, "Now I want you to watch me very narrowly in your transactions with me, for I am afraid my dishonesty," I think you would exclaim, "Well, it is the first time I ever heard a rogue split about himself." And it is the same with the class of persons before us. Real hypocrites rarely talk thus; if they are hypocrites, they are hypocrites indeed; and if you are afraid of hypocrisy in yourself, it looks like some sign at least that you are true at heart. Strive against hypocrisy, my brother; but be not so foolish as to think yourself a hypocrite when you, in so thinking, know you are sincere.

Another says, "I am afraid I shall not hold out on my way." Some brethren in the ministry will encourage this fear, will tell you that some do fall from their grace and perish. That is a kind of religion which I cannot believe in. I could not base my religion and rest my soul upon anything that was short of *everlasting*; everlasting righteousness must be my righteousness, or else I cannot feel secure and happy; and if I cannot feel secure that my name from the palms of His hands eternity cannot erase, I can neither rest nor sleep. It is a fear, oh, child of God! which need not distract you; you have no cause to fear lest you should be a cast-away after all—you have no cause to fear lest you should make shipwreck of faith, because many professors do so—many mere professors do perish, and are cast away at last; but if your hope is fixed on nothing less than Jesus's blood and righteousness, God must become a changeable being, and His covenant must be made void, before He will suffer you to perish. "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." It is no rickety Gospel that, in which you believe; it is one which will bear a weight; you may rest upon it securely:

"Once in Christ, in Christ for ever,
Nothing from His life can sever."

"Immutable His will, though dark may be my frame
His loving heart is still unchangeably the same."

My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."

And now I am going to use my rifle once more, and try if I can select still another

case, and speak a word that may be pertinent to it. I remember in my early boyhood being at my grandfather's house, and seeing there a venerable though not very ancient lady, who was dressed in black; and her mourning attire was just the emblem of her inner consciousness. She always looked sad: I never heard her say one joyful word all the time I knew her. It was whispered to me that she had committed the "unpardonable sin." And I well recollect with what amazement I looked at her. Somehow I felt superstitiously inclined to pay reverence to such a person; and being, on one occasion, left in the room with her, she called me up to her and she said—(it frightened me)—"Ah, you may be happy, but I never can. Oh, I have committed the sin that is unto death; and do what I may, I know I am a lost soul, and there is no hope for me." It was only the week before last, I met with a man who said he committed the "unpardonable sin" twelve times every hour! "Well," said I to him, "you are a great sinner and no mistake; do you think the apostle Paul did that?" "No," he replied; "I don't think he did." "Well, but Paul calls himself the 'chief of sinners;' how do you make that out? If you do as you say, you must be a greater sinner than the apostle, who calls himself the chief of them." And now a word or two to any such, if they be present. If you know what the "unpardonable sin" is, you know a great deal more than all the divines that have ever lived; for after many years of controversy, I believe it is the safest to give up the question, and for us all to confess that we do not know what the unpardonable sin is. If you, therefore, know what it is, you must be marvellously wise—wiser than all the assemblies of divines, or than the greatest men who have ever studied their Bibles. I do not believe you are so wise as that, and therefore I do not think you know what this sin is—I do not believe that you have committed it. With regard to such sin, I hold this view. We are not in Scripture told what it is, and that for very obvious reasons—to be a check upon us in all sin, lest we should commit this one. Riding along, we sometimes see boards put up in gentlemen's grounds, "Trespassers beware! Man traps set on the premises." Why is it not put upon the board, *where* these man traps are set?—why not say, so many feet from the apple tree, or so many yards from the pear tree? Not so, because the very fact that people do not know where the trap is laid is used as a caution to prevent them going there at all. Now, sin is a trespass: you have no right to sin; and God has put that great soul trap, the "sin that is unto death," and he tells you if you commit that, you cannot be saved; but what it is he does not tell you, for that would frustrate the very purpose he had in view in marking out that peculiar sin. But mark you, while we cannot tell what the sin is, we can tell you what it is not. I cannot say unto any man he has committed the sin unto death; but I can say unto some men, "You have not committed it." Do you to-day feel yourself a sinner?—do you weep because guilt lies, like a heavy burden, on your heart?—are you willing to be saved?—have you began to pray?—are you prepared to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart? Then, believe me, you have no more committed that sin than have the angels in heaven. For that sin is a "sin unto death," and you are not dead; you feel you have got spiritual life; you feel, you wish, you desire, you strive—these prove that you have got life, and therefore you have not committed the sin which is unto death, for the immediate consequence of that sin is hardness of heart, the letting of a man alone, so that he has a seared conscience, and goes to his grave careless and indifferent, without God and without hope, and at the same time without fear and without terror.

I hope, then, that these things may be the means of comforting some of you who are now sinking in the deep mire, where there is no standing, and who are saying with David, "My soul is full of troubles, my life draweth nigh unto the grave." And this brings me to the second part of my subject. I am now to make the inquiry how it is that you come to be so sorrowful as you now are? Perhaps you are like the man that had the wry neck—born so—couldn't help it: you were born with a melancholy disposition—it was a cloudy day, and you have always had a cloudy heart ever since. If so, if it be constitutional, I know of scarcely anything that can totally deliver you from it, though many things may alleviate your woe. "Ah," cries one, "I first of all fell into a miserable way through a sickness. Before I had the fever, sir, I used to be as happy as the days were long:—

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill!"

Well, brother, seeing that your sorrow has arisen through sickness, the wisest advice

COMFORT IN TROUBLE

I can give to you is, go to the physician. There are many of our spiritual ailments, and doubts, and fears, that spring far more from a sickly body than from anything amiss with the heart. Depend upon it, a good tonic—something that will set your body to rights—will tend to restore your spiritual joy also; if you have only lived near to your God, you may have hope and comfort yet. Many a poor member of our churches cannot afford to buy enough nourishing food to keep his head above water; and therefore he gets into trouble. It is hunger and thirst that gives the devil advantage over him; inasmuch that he doubts whether he is a child of God, for no other reason than because his flesh is weak, and his poor body is sick. Strong faith may exist under strong sufferings; but there are some of the latter which do to some degree shake our confidence. Abernethy was a good doctor: when he once went to see a poor man, who was in a low way, and looking round the room, saw no chairs nor tables—for all had gone to the pawnbrokers—when he returned home, he put a couple of sovereigns in a pill-box, and sent them with the prescription, "These to be taken as often as required." It was surprising how soon the man got well—it was a kind of golden remedy for his disease. My friends, do you find some poor people, serve them just in the same way, and many a poor soul that is full of doubts and fears—if you would only give a little more to sustain the poor body that holds it—would learn to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

But I am far from believing that this is all the truth in many cases. Very much of our despondency arises from sin. Look at David's case. David had been a very happy man; and, on a sudden, he fell into dark, dark despondency; and he went, from that day to the last, limping and halting, with broken bones, to his grave. Now, there is no mystery about David's case; David's great sin was the mother of David's great trouble; if David had kept out of harm's way he would have kept out of sorrow's way; if always holy, he might have been always happy. Alas for him, that evil day when he rebelled against his God; it was the first day of his darkness, and the last of his joy, until he opened his eyes again in another world, and saw his sin and his infirmity both passed away. Very likely, my brother, your sadness is caused by sin. Search and look: find out what it is you have done that has made God angry with you.

I have thus tried to picture your case, and hinted the way by which you fell into it. And now, beloved, let me just say a word or two which may happily be the means of helping you to get out of your troubles. To some of you who are very sad at heart, I will say but two words, Be active—be active. One of the finest receipts for making a man comfortable, is to make him busy.

"Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do;"

and he also finds some misery still for idle hearts to feel.

You come to your minister, and you say, "Oh, my dear Sir, I wish you would preach some comforting sermons; do take for your text, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.' Oh, do comfort me, I am so sad." If he is wise, he will reply, "Oh yes, my dear man, I will comfort you; but do you not think you had better take a class in the Sabbath school; I will give you something to do." The boys in the winter time crowd round the fire to warm their hands and comfort their bodies; but in comes the father: "Now, boys," says he, "out with you into the garden, get to some work;" and the result is, they presently return with rosy cheeks, and hands as warm as possible.

And so it is with our lazy churches: they grumble constantly at their minister: his fire, say they, wants poking—it wants some coals putting on, it does not burn well; whilst the fault is, they themselves are lazy, and they expect the minister to make up the heat they lose by their idleness. Find, then, something to do; it is an exceedingly good way to keep off despondency.

To those who are active, let me say, Look your trouble in the face. A minister once called upon a young woman, who had been sick for many months: she lay a-dying, and she was in a very low way. She said to the minister, "Sir, I have not got a grain of faith: I have not got in my heart one spark of love to Jesus." He said, "Say that again;" so she said it again: "I have not got in my heart one spark of love to Jesus." He took out his pencil, went to the window, and wrote it down on a piece of paper, which he brought to her, and said, "Now, sign your name at the bottom of that." "What is it, sir," asked she. "Why, hear these words: 'I have not got in my heart one spark of love to Jesus:' come, sign

your name." "Oh no," she replied, "I couldn't do that." And this was made the means of bringing her out of her trouble. She was obliged to look it in its face, and then it vanished altogether.

When Master Satan says to you, "you are no saint, you are a sinner," reply, "It may be true, I am not a saint: you tell me I am no child of God: that is very likely;—but there is one thing I know, I know I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ died to save sinners, and if I never believed that before, I will believe it now for the first time: if I am not in the road, I will go back, and come in at the wicket-gate again. Thou sayest I am no saint; but thou canst not deny that I am a sinner:."

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling."

I will go back again, and repose my unfeigned trust in the Lord Jesus!"

And now, in conclusion, permit me to give you a little advice—those of you who are happy in your faith, and rejoicing in Christ—those who have kept out of these troubles:—for "prevention is better than cure." We had a servant once who always used to be singing—whether outside the door, whitening the steps; whether washing the linen, cleansing the tea things, or cooking the dinner, she would be constantly singing or humming over something. But I said to her one day, "Betsy, what makes you sing so?" "Well, sir," she answered, "I think it keeps bad thoughts away; and if I didn't sing, sir, sometimes I should get so low spirited, I shouldn't know what to do with myself!" A good deal of philosophy in Betsy; because you know that boys, if they have to go through a church yard at night, always begin whistling, to keep their spirits up. Singing does people good, especially "Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." Such things cheer the heart; if we were to sing twice as much, we should only have half as little time to groan in; if we had twice as many psalms, we should only have half as many sighs; so many songs, so many the less of growlings and murmurings. I should like some of you to live on hymn books—fine things for you to feed upon—until you become consolidated masses of psalmody, wherever you go breathing hymns of praise! That dear old Rowland Hill, when not preaching, was generally humming a tune; he was once overheard singing to himself:

"And when I shall die, Receive me, I'll cry,
For Jesus has loved me—I cannot tell why;
But one thing I find—we two are so joined,
He won't be in heaven, and leave me behind."

What a sweet thing was this to sing. Those of us who have got such verses as these in our memory, have got a powerful weapon wherewith to keep out Satan. Christmas Evans, that mighty preacher, once told a story or parable, which I will give you, though I cannot tell it as he did.—Once upon a time, the devil flew up from the pit, "seeking whom he might devour," and he said within himself, "I will have souls to-day, I will deceive, delude, destroy, and reap my pleasure on man." So he flew up silently and unseen, through the air, till he came to a little valley sleeping betwixt two hills; and there, in the bosom of the vale, by the side of a little stream and a little garden, there was a small cottage, with trellis work and jasmine; and in the porch there sat a fair young girl, knitting: "Ah," said the devil, "I'll have *her*: I'll tempt her away to the great town: she shall be deceived, she shall be ruined;" and then he rejoiced to think, "I shall have her for myself at last." So he was about to step up to tempt her, when she began to sing, and the words she sang were these:

"Jesus, I love thy charming name,
'Tis music to mine ear;

Fain would I sound it out so loud
That earth and heaven might hear.

"Ah," said he, "it's no use tempting that girl to sin; she has got the love of Christ in her heart: I'd better be off somewhere else."—He then came to a plain, where were fields ploughed ready for the wheat; the horses were resting, for it was dinner time, and the boy looking about him, in attendance on the horses. "Ah," said the devil, "I'll have that boy: I will tempt him to steal his master's goods: he will then be sent to prison, and will get in with a lot of rascals, who will teach him to do worse things than he ever knew before: he will go from bad to worse, until at length he becomes a murderer, and is hanged;—oh, that will make up for my failure with the girl this morning."—But, the boy had a song too:

"The Lord my shepherd is,
Now shall my wants be well supplied:
Since He is mine, and I am His,
What can I want beside?"

"Oh," says the devil, "this boy doesn't want anything besides; it's no use my tempting him to steal anything; he is quite content with what he has got—what a bad day's work I am making of it! I had better by half be with old Williams (a good old preacher, who lay a-dying) now; if I can tempt old Williams to deny his God on his dying bed, what a fine thing that will be; it will make all the country round ring with the news." So away he flew as quick as his evil wings could carry him, for he wanted to make up for the loss of the day. He arrived at length at the village. The lights were extinguished in the cottages—the people had gone to bed, except in one upper room, where there was the ray of a rushlight to be seen in the top window. He knew that room—"the old man is not dead yet, or else the light would be out: I will go, and catch him when flesh and heart are failing, and induce him to deny his God: he shall even curse God when he is dying; and then, what triumph will be mine!" So upstairs he went; and when he got into the room, he found old Mr. Williams still alive, though reduced to a skeleton: his wife and family standing around the bed, taking a last farewell of him. But ere he could thrust a doubt or insinuation into the old man's heart, old Williams's eyes glistened, and he put out his hand all gaunt and bony, and said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me—Thy rod and staff they comfort me: Thou hast prepared a table before me, in the presence of mine enemies." "Ah," said Satan, "he meant that last line for me—in the presence of mine enemies;" and he slunk away back to his pit, for he never had so ill a day all his life before. See how good it is to have the mind pre-occupied: that heart is sure to be well kept from every evil thing which is full of good things. Live near to God; feed upon His word; consult His truth; seek to imitate the character of Christ, and put your alone trust in Him, and you may face a frowning world, and bid defiance to death and hell.

And now I have done, if you will allow me to make just one more sentence or two of appeal. "Ah," says some sprightly young man—a gay, "fast" lad—" 'tis just as I always thought; these religious people are about the most miserable folk going: I knew they were so: see how he has to comfort them!" "Very well, sir, very well: that's your opinion. You are very much mistaken, though; and we can prove it to you incontestably. Do you know the old woman who wears a red cloak, and who is shivering all the winter, in a garret, over a bit of fire made of two sticks; so poor that robbers couldn't steal from her, with scarcely enough to keep body and soul together; and the poor creature, too, always in doubts and fears. She loves her God, but is one of the desponding sort, and very seldom experiences much joy. "Come here, Missus, come here. You see that young man there; he says we are all a miserable lot; now he is a respectable young man, with a fortune, a nice business, in good health, strong in body: will you change with him? There is his money—look what a lot: you do not get more than sixpence or so a week, and now and then a little from some kind friend or other. Will you change with him?" "No," she says, "No, it is little I have got in this world, and little comfort I get even in my religion; but I can say, young man (and the old woman says it with tears running down her cheeks),

"Though you may trust in all your stores,
And tell how bright they shine,
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,
And my Redeemer's mine."

"Thank God for that," says the woman;

"While my faith can keep its hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."

Oh, that you all knew this to be true! Seek the Saviour whom now I preach unto you. "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized, shall be saved. This is the gospel which Christ has told us to preach, and He adds, "He that believeth not, shall be damned." We cannot alter the message; we deliver it as it stands, crying again, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The Lord now add His blessing, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

REVIVAL WORK.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, 7TH APRIL, 1858,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

IN A LARGE BUILDING ERECTED FOR THE PURPOSE, WITHIN THE
PIECE HALL, HALIFAX.

"O, Lord, revive Thy work."—Hab. iii. 2

OUR hearts have, during the last few weeks, been full of joy and gratitude at the good news which has come across the sea from the land of the west. We hear that one of the most extraordinary religious awakenings has taken place in the United States. As many as fifty thousand persons are reputed to have been added to the churches there in one month. There never has been known, since about a hundred years ago, in the days of Jonathan Edwards, such a thorough shaking throughout the length and breadth of the land, in religious matters. Now, what is there standing in the way of Great Britain, why *we* should not see the same? Why may not every Christian in England *pray* for the same? why should he not *work* for the same? why should he not, then, *look* for the same? and why should not *we* have it at last? There is a curse in America that we have not—to say the least, we are not slaves, and would call no men slaves; but if, even there, the great work of God's Spirit has been carried on, we have, at least, one more probability why we should have the like. Only let us strive in prayer, let us labour diligently, and the day shall yet come when we shall see a great revival, when the name of God shall be glorified, and His Church increased.

It is on that subject that I shall address you to-night, upon the well-known words in the prayer of Habakkuk, "O Lord, revive Thy work."

Now, in beginning, it is very clear that there are three doctrines taught in our text. The first doctrine is, that *Salvation is God's work*. Secondly, that *the work of grace often wants reviving*. And thirdly, that *no one can revive it but God Himself*. These three things are clearly in the text, and he that runs may read them.

First, then, the great salvation which God has sent into the world is *entirely His work*. Whether it be in the individual or in the mass, there is no true religion except such as cometh from above. A thousand mistakes have been made about this matter; and there is but one way of settling this truth, which is so explicit as to deny every error. Some say, that religion is, in part at least, the work of priests: certain men, gifted with peculiar powers, are set apart to the office of the ministry; and when they preach, or when they pray, it is supposed that there is in them a certain measure of power by which the church and the world are blessed. Ah, my brethren, God does make use of ministers to establish His work; but no minister ever yet intermeddled with God's work himself. We may be the instruments, just as Milton's pen was the instrument for writing "Paradise Lost;" but the pen might as well claim the authorship of that wondrous work as any of us claim the slightest iota of glory in the work of salvation. God, from first to last, must have the glory; neither priest, nor evangelist, nor minister—and there will be a curse and a blight on that man's labour who does not always stand behind his Master, and declare that without Him he can do nothing. There is another phase of error which also cuts at this truth. I believe that many of my brethren of whom I am now about to speak, do not see the legitimate tendency of certain doctrines they inculcate; but there are some in the world who teach doctrines, which, when distilled, come to this—that man is to help God in the work of salvation. I care not who the man may be who says that: he is in error. Man, when he is moved by the Spirit, and empowered by Him, may help as an instrument in his own salvation after he has been quickened;

but the first work of conversion is altogether irrespective of man, as to its agency. God the Holy Spirit quickens the dead sinner; He asks of the sinner neither will nor power, but gives him everything, finding him without anything. "Salvation is of the Lord" alone: Jonah learnt that in the whale's belly. If some preachers I know of were sent to a place about as dark as that, they would learn it too: a little more soul-trouble, a little more deep experience, would make them come out with this grand old truth—sometimes called Calvinism, but which, after all, is only Christianity in its bold, naked form, "Salvation is of the Lord."

We call that man an infidel who says that the world was not created by God: that man is worse than an infidel who takes away the glory of salvation from God. If I wished to choose one out of two sins—the sin of denying God's glory in creation, or in salvation, I would prefer to deny, against my senses, that God created the world, rather than deny that God saves souls. If I *must* commit a sin, let me do the lesser one; for that surely is the greatest which touches the brightest jewel in the crown of God—the jewel of the work of salvation. No, my hearers, you may cavil if you please at this doctrine; but there it stands, and you must confess its truth, or else, denying it, you will either be forced to find it true in this life, or in the next. Salvation is God's work, from the very first holy desire that is breathed into the sinner, till the last dying wish with which he enters into heaven. God shows the sinner his need: he neither could nor would know his need unless God showed it unto him. It is the Holy Spirit who gives the sinner an insight into the all-sufficiency of Christ: he would never understand that unless he were taught of the Spirit. It is, then, the Spirit that touches the will, influences the conscience, guides the sinner out of himself unto Christ, and saves him. And after that, it is still all of God: He who was the Alpha must be the Omega: He must work all our works in us, or else we shall never see God's face with acceptance. Of this I am persuaded, if I should ever get with my feet on the golden threshold of Paradise, and my finger on its pearly latch, unless I had all-sufficient grace to take the last step, I must die and perish on the very portal of heaven. "Grace first contrived the way," grace supplied the means to carry out the way; and then when we despised the way, grace put us in it. I know it is true myself—and cannot we *all* say:

"Grace taught my soul to pray;
Grace made my eyes o'erflow;
'Tis grace that's kept me to this day,
And will not let me go."

But without grace—without grace from God—there is no salvation; for "salvation is of the Lord" alone.

This doctrine, I suppose, we are all ready to admit. The second one is, that the *work of salvation often wants reviving*. You find it so in your own hearts;—one day you are full of faith, to-morrow full of doubts. One day you can sing like an angel, to-morrow your throat is dry, and not a note rises from your soul. One day you stand on Pisgah's summit, and another day the dens of the leopards are your dreary habitation. You are at times full of zeal—nothing is too hard for you; you could die for Christ; you feel that you could "give your body to be burned," if it were necessary, to magnify His name. But alas! perhaps, there comes a long season of backsliding—your soul grows cold and dead: joy flies away; lukewarmness comes, and cools your soul; all your happiness departs, and your fervour becomes quenched in a frost of cold insensibility. You often want to be revived; nay, more than that, you know that my text may be read. (as it is in the Hebrew) "Oh Lord, *preserve* thy work;" for there are times when not only does the work want reviving, but it seems as if it were almost gone out, and it wants to be kept alight. Blessed be God, if any of you need reviving, you have the promise that you shall have it if you seek it with diligence:

"God will not quench the smoking flax,
Nor break the bruised reed:"

He carefully takes the flax, and blows it with His own sweet breath; and when one spark appears, He gently bloweth it until there is another, and at last the flame becomes bright, and strong, and mighty. So may it be with each of us, in our own hearts, in the "hidden man of the soul."

Now, I am sure it is so, too, with the church at large. There comes, every now and then, about once in fifty years, a great star in our churches: God sends a *Whitfield*—a great wave seems to arise upon the surface of the church, and rolls over the

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sand of man's sins. Gradually it falls back; and perhaps there follow fifty more years of dull sloth and routine. Again God appears, in another marvellous manner—he shows His power and His might. But then again the revival dies out—the light of Israel seems to be quenched, and the glory to have departed. It strikes me that at this period we are somewhere between two great waves; and I pray the Lord God that we may very soon, by His infinite mercy, see another great one rise, mightier than any that have gone before. Look at our churches: you will see almost everywhere (and I would not speak too harshly), you will see everywhere a coldness which cannot be too much lamented. There is a little awakening just now some of our ministers have found out that they have got tongues, and begin to speak to “the common people,” talking, too, in old-fashioned Saxon. They have begun to find out, also, that, if they would save souls, they must preach as if they meant it—must not leave their hearts in their studies, bringing their old dry mummeries with them, to stand in a square box for an hour. There is a little awakening, but there is still need of far more of the arousing spirit than they have yet received. I am sure, if you look around you—if any thoughtful man considers the signs of the times—he will admit that the doctrine of the text is a doctrine of fact—that the church often needs reviving, and sometimes needs preserving.

There is one more doctrine included in the text. (I shall presently come to an earnest exhortation.) That is, that nobody can revive God's church but God: “Oh Lord, revive thy work.” I have not the slightest atom of faith in any professional ritualism. I have never seen any real good come of it: this I have seen, that while the revivalist has been there, the people have been warmed, and full many have professed to be converted; but a blast and a blight has been left on those churches for years afterwards, and an injury has been done them which they never could recover. It is a sort of spiritual intoxication, producing a kind of arousing of the man, only to get flatter afterwards than he ever was before. But although I do think this kind of revivalism does no good, I know there are revivals that are genuine and real, and in each of these there is this prominent mark, that they are most visibly and eminently of God. Now, in the great revival in New England, in Jonathan Edwards' time, you know it was first produced by a sermon preached by President Edwards. There was an ordination, I think, and he attended it, but the expected minister did not arrive, and the President was asked to preach. He had one sermon in his pocket, for he always wrote his sermons and read them; and he was by no means a mighty speaker, in the common acceptance of the term. So he took out his manuscript, put it up to his eye, and stood still, almost without motion, except now and then the lifting of his hand; and he read his sermon through from beginning to end. The Lord seemed to move through that assembly of people; a mysterious influence entered into all hearts; men went to their homes, and they told of the great things that they had felt within; ministers went home, and they began to preach differently; members went home, and they began to pray more earnestly; and on a sudden, from the spark that seemed to be kindled, by the accident of Edwards being called upon to preach, there came as it were one mighty sheet of fire, which spread through the land, as the consuming element sweeps over the prairie. And in the present revival, the same fact may be noticed. There are no great revivalists in America now, who are making any wonderful stir. God just packed them all about their business—sent them somewhere else, and said, “Now, gentlemen, I am about to do it.” He began it Himself, and He is carrying it on. He has aroused New York and all New England with a mighty strength, the end whereof no tongue can tell. The Lord has done it; and whatever we may talk about revivals, the Lord must do the work, and the Lord alone. It is ours to use the instrument, but it is also ours to recollect that all the strength, and all the might, must come from on high.

Are there any of you here that were converted by a man? If you were, you may suspect your conversion. If one man can convert you, another can unconvert you: that which man does, man can undo. Have any of you had your churches revived by a man? Then they may fall back again. But if it has been a genuine work—a supernatural work of God the Holy Ghost—not death, nor hell, can ever destroy God's own work: no, stand it must, and prevail it shall.

Thus I have mentioned the three doctrines of my text; and now, with all my might, I am about to speak to you on the subject of a revival, and try to stir up your minds, by way of remembrance, to seek after a revival of religion.

I beseech you, men, brethren, and fathers, strive with God, both day and night,

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for a revival of religion in our midst; and I give you for my first argument this—the effects of a revival may well urge you to pray. When revivals come into a land, they make a great change. There is the minister: he used to preach at an average rate of three miles an hour—he certainly never went beyond that: he was diligent, too, in trying to pick out all the words with seventeen syllables, the week long, and thrusting them into his sermons, because (good man!) as there are stones in fruit, he thought there ought to be hard words in sermons. It was very seldom that he ever stirred himself in his pulpit: had he taken but a pinch of snuff, the people would have noticed it; it would have been a new thing with him, for he was so regular a stager, that in the same old cart-rut he had gone for fully twenty years. But there came a revival: he did not at first know what to make of it; but somehow or other, he brushed himself up, brought his energy into play, and (it is currently declared) the next Sunday he actually told an anecdote! He finds a tear unwittingly come into his eye; and he does not exactly know how it is—but the people seem to catch up his words. Another Sunday, and the man grows more earnest still; and the good old woman in the gallery, who had never been disturbed in her sleep before, asked, “What has come over our minister?” It was said that he was “growing quite young again;” but the fact was, he was growing good again, and God was pouring His Spirit into his heart. The good man put all his old sermons under the bottom of the bed, and set to work to find a few good, homely thoughts, that he might earnestly speak to the people. His congregation were so struck they could not make it out at all: once so dull and drowsy, and now so changed! But Monday night comes, and with it the prayer-meeting. Never were seen so many present before. The vestry was half full—how wonderful! And the Monday after, better still: quite full! Ah, but the best of it was yet to come, they had to turn into the chapel at length, for lack of room in the vestry! And (what was almost regarded as a miracle) the good old brother, who used to begin with the unthinking horse, and go on with the oil poured from vessel to vessel, to the full extent of twenty minutes, actually forgot the horse, broke the vessels, and prayed half-a-dozen times over, “O Lord, save souls, for Jesus Christ’s sake!” Well, it then got into the Sunday school: the teachers began to look up all the children; the addresses were more solemn than they ever were before; and the children became more thoughtful—nay, some of them were converted. And then followed the good effects of the revival around; the empty seats in the chapel got filled; and, better still, the church got full too; the minister called an inquirer’s meeting, and oh! such a number came; and the good man was ready to say, “Who hath begotten me these?” But the most gratifying result of all was, those that were added to the church stood firm—they did not run away from it: it was God’s revival, and God’s revivals are not spurious: they stood fast in after days, and many of them, in the future, became ministers of the Gospel, and some of them were sent into foreign lands, to preach amongst the heathen the Word of Jesus Christ our Lord. Oh, how I should like to see such revivals as these in your good Yorkshire chapels! Some of our churches down London way—Essex chapels especially—have never done anything, I do believe, for the last fifty years, that their great-grandfathers did not do—never. If you went into a village, and proposed to preach in the open air, you would be met by sundry objections—“No, it is so highly Calvinistic,”—“No, the Wesleys do that!” Well, if they do a good thing, why should not we also? If a special prayer-meeting is proposed, some one asks, “What is the use of it?” the people are so occupied; the market, too, comes on a Wednesday, and it would prove such a great interference with business; “No, they had rather not, there were too many meetings already.” Good men—very good, but not quite up to the times, or else they would have seen that, now and then, extraordinary means must be used to produce extraordinary effects. Some of our churches would be frightened out of all manner of propriety, if God the Holy Spirit should once begin a work of this nature in the midst of them. There are good old deacons everywhere to be found who, if more than one candidate a month presented himself for church membership, would exclaim, “Sure, they cannot be good uns;” and would, forthwith, begin to try to pump the poor souls dry; and if such candidates made any little blunder, would at once conclude, “Ah, not exactly up to the mark; I do not think you ought to be received!” The effects of a true revival through and amongst all our churches would be positively astounding—it would do ministers good, members good, deacons good, and, above all, it would do sinners good, by bringing them to Jesus Christ our Lord.

Christian man, I beseech you, pray that God would pour out His spirit upon us.

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The devil is wide awake, hell is active, infidelity is rampant, popery is making mighty strides, every system of error is on the alert. Up, up, ye guardsmen of the truth! Up for God and for His cause! and cry unto Him, that, as the enemy is becoming mighty, He would prove Himself mighty too. Remember how your time is fleeing; it is but little that you can do for Christ, should you be even spared to live to eighty years of age. What are eighty years? how little to spend for Him who spent His life for us. Oh, when we think of how little we can do, it should stir us up to do all we can, and ask that God, if he will not lengthen out our years, may double their effect, by making us doubly laborious and doubly useful. Remember, too, while time is flying, men are dying; souls are being lost, sinners are being hurried away to the bottomless gulf. Does not this move your hearts? would you not seek to save them, if you could hear the shrieks and groans of those who are now past hope? and some of these are your own sons and daughters, your own flesh and blood. You have every cause to ask for a revival, for there are among you wives that have drunken husbands; there are husbands here that have ungodly wives; there are present-to-night parents that have sons and daughters who make their hearts ache. If you will not plead for the conversion of common sinners, at least ask for a revival, that these your own offspring may be saved by grace. If this argument touches you not, what other can I use? "He that cares not for his own household, is worse than a heathen man and a publican." Oh, how sweet it is to parents to see their children brought unto Christ! I met with a remarkable instance of a happy mother a few months ago. A widowed mother had two sons, who were nearly come to man's estate. They had been excellent children in their boyhood, but they began to be headstrong (as young men will be), and they would not brook the maternal control; they would sometimes spend the Sunday anywhere but where they ought to spend it. Their mother determined that she would never give up praying for them, and one night she thought she would stop at home from the house of God, shut herself up in the house, and pray for their conversion. The very night that she had thus set apart for prayer, the eldest boy said to her, "I am going out to night to hear the minister that preaches down Southwark way; he's an odd man, and I want to hear him." She did not think much of this minister, but she was so glad that the boy was going within the sound of the Word, that she said, "Go, my son." He added, "My brother is going with me." Their mother stayed at home, and earnestly prayed for them.

They came to the house of God; and that odd minister was blessed to their souls. When their mother opened the door on their return home, the first boy fell upon his mother's neck, weeping as if his heart would break. "Mother," he said, "I have found the Saviour; I am a believer in the Lord Jesus." She looked at him a minute, and then said, "I knew it, my son; to-night I have had power in prayer, and I know that I have prevailed. I knew it would be so." "But," said the younger brother, "Oh, mother! I too, have been cut to the heart; and I hope I may give my heart to Jesus." Happy was she, when she stood by the baptismal one month, and knew that the next month her own children would be immersed in the name of the Lord Jesus. But happier still was I, when she came to me and said, "You have been the means of the conversion of my two sons; I have never thought of baptism before, I will be baptized with them;" and down went the whole three into the water, and I baptized them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Why should it not be so in *your* case? If God should send a revival of religion in the midst of your church, you may hope that your children will be included in it. "But if everything fails, I would give you one more." There hangs your dying Saviour, bleeding to death. He looks upon you; methinks I hear Him say to you to-night, "Live sinners: I love you: do not you love sinners? do not you love Me?" I think I see him with his hands nailed, and he looks on you, my brother yonder, and he says to you, "Sinner, I did all this for thee; what wilt thou do for me?" What will you do for Christ? Brothers, sisters, what will you do? Ask your hearts the question; and answer it as you mean to carry it out: what will you do for Christ? One of you says, "I will give my money for Christ;" another says, "I will use my pen for Christ;" another cries, "I will give my all to Christ—all I am, and all I have, shall be therefore Thine." Practice it then; go and live in the world as not your own, but as being bought with a price; and God grant that so a great revival may spring up in our land.

And now I shall conclude this subject by trying to tell you how you can, as Christians, each of you, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, promote a revival. It is hard to tell, dear friends, what is the best act that a man can do for saving souls when

his heart is right; for sometimes the very strangest act becomes the most useful. I will tell you a story, and I know it to be true, as I intimately know the persons whom it concerns. That holy man, Mr. George Whitfield, was once staying at Prince Rhode Island; and he stopped whilst there at a captain's house, a rich and worthy man. The family were very much attached to Mr. Whitfield—they did everything to make him comfortable. Whitfield was accustomed always to speak to the persons where he stopped, and warn them to "flee from the wrath to come." But this captain was a man so worthy that he did not like to introduce the subject. The devil said to him, "George, don't say anything to the captain; he will get right by-and-bye; he will be sure to come round; see what a nice sort of man he is; it wouldn't look respectful of you, either, to be intruding your religion upon him: he hears you preach, that will do." So George let day go after day, and did not say anything to the captain, his wife, or his family. At length the last night came, and George Whitfield went to bed with an aching heart, for conscience said to him, "Whitfield, you have not done all you could for the salvation of this family, and therefore you are guilty." The flesh said, "No, no, Whitfield, you do a great deal now; God will excuse your letting that alone." Again the Holy Spirit said, "Not so, not so, Whitfield, you *must* say something." Well, poor fellow, what to do he could not tell, for he felt he could not summon courage to speak to the captain on the last day. He said, "If I had done it before, I could have done it well, but not now." At last this thought struck him: he had a diamond ring on his finger (I never knew the use of those things till I heard this story!) He went to the window-pane, and wrote these words, "One thing thou lackest." He went his way; it was all that he did, and his heart still ached, for he felt sure he had not done all he ought. He was no sooner gone than the captain, who loved Whitfield, and venerated him, went up stairs, and said, "I will look at the bed where this holy man slept." The window-pane at once caught his eye: he stood, and looked, and looked, and wept, and wept, and wept again. He then went to the head of the stairs, and said, "Wife, come here." He added, "There, you and I thought we had made this good man comfortable, and I thought that he had forgotten our souls; but you see he was troubled about us: he did not like to tell it to us, and yet he could not go away without, for his heart was aching about us." "Oh," she said, "I did wonder he did not seem more earnest about us, but I see it now;" and she began to weep too. He said to her, "It is a good time, I think; let us call the children up." He called the family up, and said, "Look there: read that." They read it, and there and then the Spirit of God convinced them of sin, and led them to Christ. I know the person now who has in her possession this diamond pane of glass bearing this very writing, which is kept as a relic by the family, of the most sacred kind. Who can tell how little a thing may do good? Only get your heart right; get an anxious desire to do good, and you cannot tell how you may be the means of promoting a revival, and bringing about the conversion of your friends.

But if you want larger means, let me say, first of all, "Meet for prayer." Oh, a good prayer meeting, what a grand thing it is!! I like the "Amen," of our Methodist friends, when they put it in the right place: to hear it sometimes, it makes a man respond, "Amen:" he cannot help it. I was once at a Primitive Methodist meeting, where a good brother stuck fast, so they said to him, "plead the blood, brother!!" It frightened me, till I recollected. The poor man did plead the blood of Jesus, and we had a blessed prayer meeting, indeed. What we want is, a little more life and earnestness. Not a *little* more, but a great deal more. If we all prayed as we would pray for our own lives—if we all said no more words than were wanted, and left off when we had done, then we should have good prayer meetings. Some of our brothers evidently act on the idea that they *must* keep up to the orthodox twenty minutes; and there they stand, telling God Almighty everything in the world, but not praying a bit! I told one of our friends one night, who asked the Lord to forgive him for his shortcomings, that he should pray to be delivered from his long-comings. He prayed an awful while; had he occupied only half the time, we should have enjoyed his prayer; but he prayed us right in, and then prayed us out again. Our prayer-meetings *must* not be shams; they must be real prayers—five minutes a-piece, ten at the outside; and those who *do* pray, must be earnest, or refuse to pray altogether. One cold prayer damps a meeting. Then again, if revivals become numerous, we should become more consistent. We have rich men, members of our churches, grinding the faces of the poor: and, while this is the case, God will assuredly withhold His blessing. Some men, when they are going to get rich, seem as if they

had constructed a great cauldron, into which they are ever ready to pitch their poor clerks and workpeople, with their wives and children, crying, "Never mind *them*; don't care about *their* comfort;" and thus they go on, until curses follow them as they walk the streets. They seem to say, "Boil them all up, and then let us go and take the sacrament, let us go to the Lord's table." And you, tradespeople, too, when the poor come to deal with you, be sure you doctor all the things they buy; if you must sell cheap, do it; but you know how to mix the red lead and the pepper. Take care to adulterate as largely as possible—that's the way to get on in this world!! People say they must *live*; I wonder if they have forgotten that they must *die*. We cannot expect to have God's blessing until both tradesmen, masters, and workpeople feel that one is their great Master, even Christ, and that all men are brethren. Again, some men, members in our churches, are as bad as their masters. The masters squeeze them, and they none the less squeeze their masters. They always take advantage to become time-servers. The coachman, for instance, if his master comes a little too early, is always found at the neighbouring alehouse. Of course, he has only "called there to meet a friend," he has only "been there one minute;" whilst you feel perfectly conscious, all the while he is talking, that he has been there two or three hours; and if you had not come home, he would have stuck there. Some people think it is very hard for a master to oppress his servant, but no harm at all for the servant to cheat his master.

I have got, in my own congregation, some men who pray most delightfully, but I would not give them sixpence a day for their work; they are lazy as their hides; they would eat other people's bread, but would never know what it is to earn their own; and they, forsooth, expect God to bless us, while we have got a lazy set of fellows among us who are good for nothing. The great commandment in the Bible is, "work six days in the week." Some people make a mighty fuss about "remembering the seventh day, to keep it holy," but are not quite so careful to read the whole commandment through; they leave out "six days shalt thou labour." And those who do not work six days (or five and a half, that is enough for everybody, I'm sure), break the command, because the commandment which tells a man to work during the week, tells him to rest on the Sabbath.

You see, I treat you all alike; there is a small piece for every one, and if the cap fits anybody, let them wear it to their heart's content. I was preaching in the shoe country some time ago, when shoes were going down sixpence per sole, and the men clapped me; so I said a few more things, and they clapped again; so I said, "I will try and pitch into you." So when I tried to talk to the men a little, the masters began to clap, and I have therefore to-night given a little bit for both of you, as it seems that both of you need it. Oh, if we could but love one another! Down in the cotton districts, in the wool country, and in the iron districts we do not love one another as we ought. In London, the old idea about loving one another—the master loving his servant, and the mistress her servant girl—this idea is deemed utopian, ridiculous—who can do it? I wish, though, we could get the old strange idea back again—"love one another." Why, men would work ten times more cheerfully, if they could only feel that their masters loved them, and took an interest in them; and masters would be better served likewise;—and when this is brought about, it is then that we shall see a great revival of religion. But the present clashing of interests, the knocking one against another, prevents the growth of religion; for the poor man says, "I shall not go to chapel; look at the deacon, he's a *hard* man." Then there is the church, where most of them are poor; and the master says, "I'll not join them: it's *only* my men;" and so both of them are kept from the place which might bless them, because they have not learned the great truth, that "God has made of one blood all nations of men that dwell on the face of the earth," and they do not know how love each other. We must try to set this to rights, and then "God will bless us; he will bless us, and that right early." Let us go to our pulpits, my brethren in the ministry, praying for a revival; deacons, go to your offices asking a revival; church members, betake yourselves to your prayer meetings, and plead for a revival; and, oh, you that are not converted, it is for your sakes we want a revival. Hear me, while I preach the Gospel to you for a minute; you are lost, you are ruined, but Christ came to save the lost; believe on Him, and you shall be saved; cast yourself entirely upon Him; say, sink or swim, Jesus Christ is my only trust; I give up everything else, and take Christ to be my all in all; and, saying that, you may rejoice that you are safe now, and you shall be safe when the world shall reel, when the pillars of heaven shall stagger, when the stars shall fall, and when

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all things shall pass away. Believe! believe, and live! "Look unto Him, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

I will tell you to-night how I first had a hope in Christ; and, perhaps, telling that may comfort somebody else. I was four years or more under the most frightful convictions of sin; I often wonder I did not destroy myself, or go right mad. During the last six months of this four years, the heaviness became greater and greater. I used to pray and wake up early in the morning, and read "Baxter's Call to the Unconverted," "Doddridge's Rise and Progress," and "Alleine's Alarm;" but I got worse and worse, and at last I made up my mind I would go to a place of worship three times on the Sabbath, and as many times as the door was opened on the week days, and go to every place there was in the town; and that I would wander about till I did find out what I must do to be saved. I was going to a very respectable Independent chapel, one Sunday morning, and it snowed ten times harder than it has done to day. I could not get on, the snow was so deep, and it came in my eyes; so, as I heard some folks singing, I turned down a back street, and launched into a small Primitive Methodist Chapel. Well, I had heard of these people; they told me they used to sing so loud as to split one's head. I went in; they did not sing too loud for me; I heard the prayer, and sat there as miserable and wretched as possible. Then there was a local preacher came in—I don't think he was a regular preacher, but some odds-and-ends man they had picked up to put in the pulpit; but he was just the right sort of man for me. He went into the pulpit and opened his Bible, and read the words, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." He looked at me, and said, "Young man, you are in trouble." Well, I was; but could not make out how he knew it. He said, "You will never get out of your troubles, unless you obey the text." Then he called out, as none but a Primitive Methodist can do (excepting myself), "*young man, LOOK, LOOK, LOOK, LOOK, unto me!!*" and this in a little bit of a chapel; why he seemed as if he would move the slates from the roof. Well, I did look; it did not signify how loud he called; and when I looked, I hope I found mercy, for this thing I know, my soul was filled with joy, and I went home that day rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and determined to be His follower through life even unto death, if He would but keep me by His grace. Now, if any of you are in the same state let me say to you, "*Look to Jesus, look to Jesus.*" I bless God that's a Baptist text, and that's a Primitive Methodist text, and that's a Wesleyan text, and that's a Church-of-England-man's text, too. We may disagree in some things; but, poor sinner, we don't disagree here; we all of us tell you, "Look unto Jesus."

—"None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good;
Venture on Him—venture fully,
Let no other trust intrude."

Oh, that there may be one here to-night who will look unto Jesus! Spirit of the living God, hear our prayers; save sinners; grant a revival to Thy church, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen, and amen.

The Pulpit.

No. XLVI.

THE DUTY OF SELF-EXAMINATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY 24, 1858,

BY THE REV. HENRY MELVILL, B.D.

(Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty, and Canon Residentiary of St. Paul's,)

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, LONDON.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thought: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."—Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

THERE are few duties of greater importance than that of self-examination; for every man may be called a mystery to himself, and unless he search with extraordinary diligence he may easily remain an undiscovered territory, and die in a great degree ignorant of the little world that lieth within. It is so very easy to hide ourselves from ourselves, nay, it is often so much for our present comfort to effect such concealment, that it is nothing wonderful, though unspeakably perilous, that there should be no lack of the most finished of all hypocrisies, that by which the hypocrite imposes on himself. There is many a man who can scarcely be said to have a suspicion as to what his real character is, so well has he contrived to varnish its deformed parts or keep them out of sight. You may remember how strikingly this is put in our Lord's address to the church of the Laodiceans—"Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." If this be so, men and brethren—if most professing Christians imagine themselves all that they should be whilst they are at the very lowest point of spiritual destitution, then indeed of all duties none can be more important than that of self-examination. His own heart should be every man's great study; that he may see that he deceive not himself as to his acceptance with God, and thus leave his mistake to be found out when too late to be repaired. And not only is the duty of self-examination one of vast importance, it is one of immense difficulty, for we so naturally flatter ourselves that all is right, while much is wrong; we are so disposed to put a favour-

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able construction on our own motives and actions, we are so tender of our own faults, and so fearful of probing to the quick, that often when we examine ourselves fully and fairly we shall probably have left many of the worst parts untouched, and have pronounced a wrong decision upon ourselves. Indeed, (and this we may suppose to have been David's feeling when he uttered the prayer of the text,) we are quite incompetent of ourselves to the examining ourselves, and we shall never get below the surface of the heart, if not assisted from above in penetrating its recesses; and it is only so far as the moral eyesight is purged and penetrated by God that we can behold ourselves in our genuine colours.

But we shall have to recur to these several points as we pursue the trains of thought that will naturally be opened by our text; at present it will suffice to have reminded you of the importance and the difficulty of the duty which ought not to be so much occasionally attempted as continually performed. This is one of those things in which, as in matters of business, it is most dangerous to get into arrears, A day should not pass without close scrutiny of what we have been throughout that day. If we defer scrutiny till to-morrow our faults will be sure to seem diminished by the distance; whilst in sitting in judgment on the errors of yesterday we shall almost unavoidably lose sight of the errors of to-day. And we may assure the young that they cannot form a more profitable habit than that of bringing their daily conduct to the tribunal of conscience, so that the last thing before they close their eyes in sleep may be to inquire as to what they have done which they ought not to have done, and what left undone which they ought to have done. The mere consciousness that they are to hold this review will rapidly come to exert great influence throughout the day; they will be more circumspect, more watchful of actions, and thoughts, and words; more fearful of wrong compliances and doubtful indulgences, when they know that they are to appear before themselves a few hours hence, and to be tried by the tests which God's word presents.

Let us now proceed to the topics of discourse more particularly suggested by the text. That text is a prayer, and it indicates, as we think, three great facts in regard to the suppliant; the first, that David thoroughly wished to become acquainted with himself; the second, that he felt conscious that God could see through all disguises; and the third, that he desired to discover, in order that by Divine help he might correct whatsoever was wrong in his conduct.

I. Now, the first inference which we draw from our text, when considered as indicating the feelings of the petitioner is, that he was thoroughly honest, that it was really his wish to become acquainted with his heart. And is there, you may say, anything rare or remarkable in this? Indeed, we think there is. It would need, we believe, a very high degree of piety to be able to put up with sincerity the prayers of our text. For, will you tell me that it does not often happen, that even whilst men are carrying on a process of self-examination there is a secret wish to remain ignorant of certain points, a desire not to be proved wrong when interest and inclination combine in demanding an opposite verdict? To be candid in this matter, you will have to confess that there are pursuits which you are so loth to abandon, pleasures which you are so resolved, if possible, to keep, that you try to avoid the using any touchstones or the applying any rules which would force

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you to abandon what you would like to retain. In searching into yourselves, you know where the tender points are, and those points you will be apt to avoid, so as not to put yourselves to pain, nor make it evident how you need the caustic and the knife. Indeed we may be sure that we state nothing but what experience will prove, when we declare it a high attainment in religion to be ready to know how bad we are. If we put out of sight worldly interests which may be endangered by discovering error or unlawfulness where we have hitherto felt safe, there is something so humiliating in a sense of our own corruption, so disheartening in finding ourselves worse than we supposed, that we instinctively shrink from a revelation of the heart, and could desire, if we dared, to let the veil rest on many of its deformities. Not to be afraid to know the worst of ourselves, yea, to be sincerely desirous to know the worst of ourselves, this, be ye sure, is no mean attainment ; rather it is the characteristic of great progress in godliness. And this had evidently been reached by the Psalmist, for he pleads very earnestly with God that he would leave no recess of his spirit unexplored, that he would bring the heart and all its thoughts, the life and all its ways under a most searching examination, so that no form and no degree of evil might fail to be detected. But we say, the man who could do this without the least secret reservation, without a tacit wish that he might not obtain precisely what he asked, or a hope that here and there the scrutiny might be lax so as to allow some favourite things to remain in their concealment, that man has gone far in religion. It is a searching question—"Are we willing to be searched?"

Nay, and it is worthy of remark that it is to God, who abhors iniquity and hates the least sin with immeasurable hatred, that the Psalmist desires to lay bare his heart. We naturally shrink from discovering our faults to those whom we reverence and love ; they might lower us in their esteem, and we would therefore, if we could, conceal them from observation. But of all beings in the universe there is none whose favour is of such worth to us as the favour of God, and none whose abhorrence of evil is so vehement and unqualified. Where, then, is the being to whom we can be naturally less willing to expose our corruption, or from whom if we could, we should be more solicitous to hide secret faults ? And yet it was God to whom David addressed the prayer of our text. Ah, there is in this no ordinary proof of genuine religion ; therefore we give it you as a test by which to try your own spiritual state. Can you in honesty and with fervour offer up the petition before us ? It is possible that there may be desire for knowledge in all its branches except that branch to which this petition refers. There is no knowledge but knowledge of one's self the acquisition of which is humiliating. In general, a man feels he gains importance and power in gaining knowledge, and he is elated with each addition to his store. But knowledge of one's own heart is depressing and debasing. A man goes down in his own estimate in proportion as it is obtained. There is a vast difference, therefore, between desiring this knowledge, and desiring any other knowledge. I might pray for acquaintance with God ; it is a sublime and a glorious thing. The natural man can long for revelations of the Being who, having never begun, shall never cease to be ; who inhabits alike eternity and infinity, and who, though everywhere invisible, is everywhere putting forth demonstrations of his presence. Or I might pray for acquaintance with the mysteries of

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redemption ; I might desire to know more of that stupendous arrangement which having been conceived in the past eternity, tasks the future in which to develop all its wonders ; and I need not be in the least spiritually-minded in order to any longing for such knowledge as this. I may have no sense of the evil of sin, no awe of God, no aspirations after holiness, and nevertheless be intensely desirous as the philosopher who would explore the secret things of nature to be better informed upon points in which probably the whole universe has interest. Therefore, you are not to regard it as necessarily any proof of a religious state of mind that you can feel an ardent wish for greater knowledge of God ; so that when the bright landscape is before you with its varied magnificence, or the firmament dazzles you with its multitude of worlds, or the dealings of providence amaze and perplex you by their vastness or intricacy, you can pour forth a hearty supplication for a fuller acquaintance with the Creator who reared all the splendours, and the moral governor who directs all the mechanism. And neither are you to think it conclusive, as to the genuineness of your piety, that you can take delight in the study of Scripture ; that as you meet with sublime announcements, which with all your strivings you cannot overtake, and find dark intimation of truths which it would be noble to survey without a cloud, you can feel the soul gather itself into a petition that the Spirit of the Most High would enlighten the understanding and strengthen every faculty. But are you desirous of knowing how vile you are, how far gone from righteousness, how capable of committing the greatest sins were it not for God's preventing grace, how many folds of iniquity there are yet undiscovered within you ? Is it your hearty wish to get at the very bottom of your corruptions, so that you would willingly be led from the gorgeous scenes in which even the natural man can glow with something of devotional feeling, and enter those secret chambers of imagery which lie within yourselves, and which are crowded with fouler things than met the view of the astonished prophet when God laid open to him the abominations of Jerusalem. Ah ! be not hasty in answering these questions. I am not asking whether you can assent to the public ministrations of the Gospel, however experimental those ministrations may be. I know too well that you may evade all the points of the discourse, and while you are interested by its statements, and perhaps carried away by its urgency, be quite unaware of the force with which it applies to your own case, and the verdict which it passes on your own conduct. But I ask as to what passes on your retirement, when there is nothing external to give excitement to religion, but when alone with God you know that your own hearts sit in judgment on yourselves. Is there then no shrinking from the glass of the word ? Is there then no endeavour to varnish over character, or to turn away the eye from the more suspicious parts ? Or is there rather a holy boldness when going down into yourselves as though you would not if you could leave a corner unexplored, and dreaded nothing so much as the remaining ignorant of your moral condition ? What ! ye who are acquainted with this great city, did ye never hear of men in trade afraid of looking their affairs in the face, secretly suspicious of their being deranged and involved, but wanting the courage to go into the inquiry, and so slurring over matters, or patching up appearances, till ruin has been inevitable, and they have found themselves utter bankrupts ? May it not be thus with you in spiritual things ? May not the ledger of the heart, and the

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book of the life, and the balance sheet of the conscience, be only cursorily looked at, because ye have a misgiving that the more accurate study would only make you more uneasy! This is the high road to spiritual bankruptcy; hundreds are lost because liking to remain ignorant of the real state of their souls, or remiss in applying to God, who can alone lay bare all the danger and all the disorder. Be ye very watchful against this. A reluctance to know yourselves is of all obstructions the strongest to the knowing of yourselves, and, therefore, of all perils the greatest to the destroying yourselves. So that if it mark a high piety unfeignedly to use the prayer of our text, it is a height towards which you should be always on the advance. Oh! let us pray at least that we may be able to pray—"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts."

II. But hitherto we have considered our text only as proving that the Psalmist thoroughly wished to become acquainted with himself. Let us consider, in the second place, the persuasion of David that God could see through all disguises. There is in the prayer now under review a distinct recognition of the Divine Omniscience—a confession that the recesses of the heart are open unto God, though without his assistance not penetrable by ourselves. What a striking challenge is that which God addresses by the mouth of his servant Jeremiah, when he is said to appropriate to himself the knowing of the human heart, and to defy any creature to investigate its depths—"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" There is first given, you see, a most severe description of the heart, and then every order of finite being is summoned to come and try whether it can invalidate the description and quite fathom the heart. The thing is given up as hopeless; the heart is left an unsolved mystery by "angel, and principality, and power," then the Omniscient himself, as though it fitted him to interfere when created intelligences altogether failed, brings the hitherto inscrutable under his own glance, and solemnly pronounces, "I, the Lord, search the heart." I knew not what there may be in creation, which is hidden from lofty beings; they may pass, for aught I can tell, from star to star; the caverns of the deep may be open to them; there may be no barrier to their entering solid rock, and none to their traversing unlimited space; but in my own breast lies a world which is beyond their scrutiny; and man in his depravity baffles the intelligence which may perhaps master the universe in its wonderfulness. Oh! there would be something fine in this, if it were not our wickedness which makes us unsearchable! To be a problem to the angel and the archangel, to whom perhaps the only other problem is God, this would stamp a vast dignity upon man, if it were any other cause that rendered him mysterious. That there should be but two inscrutables, and that man should be one—this, indeed, seems like a testimony to the majesty of our being; and it might be, if we were not unsearchable only because corrupt, a testimony more decisive than angels could give by doing homage, or worlds by acting as ministering spirits. But it would seem that the heart thus baffles the penetration of every other being but God, simply on account of its depravity; and, accordingly, as you perceive, it is altogether on the deceitfulness of the heart, and its desperate wickedness that the challenge is made to turn, as though there were nothing but these causes or these properties to defy finite knowledge. This is a very affecting consideration—that it is only in its corrupt state and as a re-

sult of its corruption that the heart is inscrutable to every being but the Infinite. Angels might perhaps have seen into the very bottom of the waters whilst yet in their first clearness, but when guilt had thrown in the mire, there was but one eye, and that the eye of Omniscience, which could pierce the darkened depths.

But are we all conscious of this? We make a general confession of human depravity; but are we wont to estimate it by such a measure as is assigned to it in the Bible? You observe, that it was after a most sublime confession of God's Omniscience and Omnipresence that David poured forth his soul in the petition of the text. He had supposed himself mounting to heaven, and then descending to hell, "taking the wings of the morning," and rushing through infinite space; and he had acknowledged that at every step of the enormous travel he must have God at his side, observing most accurately every thought of his heart, and every motion of his will. Then it is fresh from this majestic meditation he bows himself down and beseeches the Almighty to search and try him. He had just certified himself, as it were, that nothing could be hid from God, and then he asks God to read his spirit as though God were thus proved the only being that could. Oh! here was a deep sense of his depravity. David felt that his heart was so corrupt that there was but one being who could look it through and scan all its depths; and that the Being, who by virtue of his presence in every crowd, and in every solitude, and in every world, and in every atom, must necessarily be privy to all secrets, and observant of all motions, and cognizant of all circumstances. It is hard to say which most to admire; the Psalmist's sense of the searching power of God's scrutiny, or his conviction that such a power was needed to the examining his heart. No man ever expressed in sublimer terms the might of God's glance; and this makes only more remarkable his conviction that this glance alone could look through himself. Do you share this conviction? If you do, then it is clear you can answer God's challenge; and the mighty question, "who can know it?" which may be said to have been going the round of the universe, without finding a creature ready to undertake its solution, has found in you a respondent, so that a finite intellect may fathom the mystery of the heart. And, therefore it is clear, clear on the authority of God himself, that a man who can think that he has discovered how bad he naturally is, has yet to take some of the earliest lessons as to the depravity of our nature. The grossest ignorance of ourselves is shown in the supposed thorough knowledge of ourselves; and we would not have any of you satisfied with what he is, until, like David, he can feel himself inscrutable, except to him from whom nothing possibly can be hid.

Oh! we would have a man give himself to solemn musings on the Omniscience of God. Wonderful being! whose eye takes in the whole range of immensity, and nevertheless is fixed intently upon every individual, just as though he were alone in the universe. There is not the world, with all the interminable throng which the telescope marshals that is not passing under the inspection of this Being; there is not the tiny insect in all the peopled space into which the microscope converts a single atom which has not engaged his observation. What an intelligence is here, what a scrutiny, what a comprehension, what a penetration! And when a man has wrought himself into admiration and amazement at the all-searching glance of God, then is the time to

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try and test his persuasion of his own depravity and corruption. Does he feel the depravity or corruption to be such that only this all-searching glance—that nothing of less power than this all-searching glance can determine its extent and pierce its depths? Ah, can he, after meditating on the wonders of an eye, to which the darkness and the light are both alike, which can observe at the same moment what is passing on every spot of unlimited space, which gathers equally within its vision, past, present, and future, so that eternity as well as immensity submits to its empire—can he, we say, feel that here is the exact organ which is requisite for the scrutiny of himself—that there are such complicated folds in his heart, such intricacies and such windings that any other organ must fail in the attempt at examination? Can he, in short, when his mind is most confounded by the omniscience of God, act as if he had at length discovered what alone can discover him to himself, and fall prostrate with the Psalmist, and exclaim, as one whose case is far beyond the reach of finite power—"Search me, O God, and know me; try me, and know my thoughts."

III. But, in the last place, David desired to discover in order that he might, by Divine help, correct what was wrong in his conduct. You see very clearly, from the general tone of our text, and more particularly from the expression, "See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," that David was really anxious to be set right, that he was not quieting conscience with a formal prayer for illumination, which, perhaps, secretly he did not wish to have answered, but that he sincerely felt himself liable to err, and as sincerely desired to be guided by God even though it might be to the cutting off a right hand or the plucking out a right eye. He had corrected what he had seen wrong in his conduct, but this does not satisfy him; he knew there might be things displeasing to God, though unobserved by himself, and therefore he prayed, "See if there be any wicked way in me." But to what a holiness must David have attained ere he could need, if we may so speak, Divine scrutiny, in order to his being informed of errors and defects? Is there one of us who can say that he has corrected his conduct up to the measure of his knowledge, and that now he must wait the being better informed before he can do more towards improving his life? I do not know how to define a higher point in religious attainment than supposing a man warranted in offering up the prayer of our text. I call upon you to be cautious in using this prayer. It is easy to mock God, by asking him to search you whilst you have made but little effort to search yourselves, and perhaps still less to act upon the result of the scrutiny. What hast thou to do with entreating God to see whether there be any wicked way in thee, man of business, who art so engrossed with trade that thou canst hardly collect thy thoughts for devotional exercises? There is no need of the Divine penetration; the eye of every one around thee, thine own eye, if thou wouldst but open it, can discover that thou art more entangled with earthly things than any mortal ever should be. Set thyself, then, to loosing the cords before thou dost presume to ask for the searching glance of the Omniscient. And what hast thou to do with the prayer, wavering professor, who art halting between two opinions—now making concession to the world, and then solemn resolution against it? Is there not keenness enough in thine own conscience to detect the instability? Ah! set thyself to being stedfast in religion, before thou dost ask the being examined by God. Christians in

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whom there are palpable inconsistencies, whose tempers are but half disciplined, who are harsh and fretful in their families, or ostentatious in their charities, or discontented in their circumstances, what have they to do with the prayer our text? Are they in want of the glasses or the microscopes of Deity? Will no instrument of less power search out their failings? They have need to pray to God to enable them to correct what is wrong; but they are yet a long way from the point at which they will have need to pray to God to enable them to discover what is wrong. Let it be diligently remembered that it is by using the grace of God that we may hope, according to a known rule in the dealings of God, to obtain a larger measure. If I would make way in knowing myself, I must endeavour to amend my faults as fast as I discover my faults. What has a seaman to do with asking to be taught where lie other shoals and rocks, while he is letting his ship drift among those which are already noted in his chart? Know, men and brethren, that the process of self-correction must keep pace with the process of self-examination. Act up to what you know, and then ask and hope to know more. Show that you wish to know yourselves for the only purposes for which it is of any use to know yourselves—that of improving yourselves. Yes, better else to be ignorant, better to live ignorant, better to die ignorant. An undetected fault may be visited with a “few stripes,” a fault detected but not corrected must be visited with the “many stripes.” You see, then, the clear path of duty, and therefore, also of safety. Set yourselves at once, to the altering, in the strength of that grace which is refused to none that seek it, what you already see to be wrong in your walk and conversation. This done—done honestly, done fearlessly, come to God to be examined, that you may learn, and learning, may forsake, what further wicked way there may yet be within you; thus shall you be led in the way everlasting—a way in which you will always be finding yourselves more sinful than you had expected, but in which, as fast as you discover corruption, you will bewail it and endeavour to subdue it—a way which will at last lead you to the immediate presence of God, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

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PROVIDENCE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 11, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."—Matthew x. 30.

DURING this week my mind has been much directed to the subject of Providence and you will not wonder when I relate a portion of one day's story. I was engaged to preach last Wednesday at Halifax, where there was a heavy snow storm. Preparations had been made for a congregation of 8000 persons, and a huge wooden structure had been erected. I considered that owing to the severe weather, few persons could possibly assemble, and I looked forward to the dreary task of addressing an insignificant handful of people in a vast place. However, when I arrived, I found from 5000 to 6000 people gathered together to hear the Word; and a more substantial looking place it has not been my lot to see. It certainly was a huge uncomely building, but, nevertheless, it seemed well adapted to answer the purpose. We met together in the afternoon and worshipped God, and again in the evening, and we separated to our homes, or rather, we were about to separate, and all this while the kind providence of God was watching over us. Immediately in front of me there was a huge gallery, which looked an exceedingly massive structure, capable of holding 2000 persons. This, in the afternoon, was crowded, and it seemed to stand as firm as a rock. Again in the evening there it stood, and neither moved nor shook. But mark the provident hand of God: in the evening, when the people were about to retire, and when there was scarcely more than a hundred persons there, a huge beam gave way, and down came a portion of the flooring of the gallery with a fearful crash. Several persons were precipitated with the planks, but still the good hand of God watched over us, and only two persons were severely injured with broken legs, which it is trusted will be re-set without the necessity of amputation. Now, had this happened any earlier, not only must many more have been injured, but there are a thousand chances to one, as we say, that a panic must necessarily have ensued similar to that which we still remember, and deplore as having occurred in this place. Had such a thing occurred, and had I been the unhappy preacher on the occasion, I feel certain that I should never have been able to occupy the pulpit again. Such was the effect of the first calamity, that I marvel that I ever survived. No human tongue can possibly tell what I experienced. The Lord, however, graciously preserved us; the fewness of the people in the gallery prevented any such catastrophe, and thus a most fearful accident was averted. But we have a more marvellous providence still to record. Overloaded by the immense weight of snow which fell upon it, and beaten by a heavy wind, the entire building fell with an enormous crash three hours after we had left it, splitting the huge timbers into shivers, and rendering very much of the material utterly useless for any future building. Now mark this—had the snow begun three hours earlier, the building must have fallen upon us, and how few of us would have escaped we cannot guess. But mark another thing. All day long it thawed so fast, that the snow as it fell seemed to leave a mass, not of white snow, but of snow and water together. This ran through the roof upon us, to our considerable annoyance, and I was almost ready to complain that we had hard dealing from God's providence. But, if it had been a frost

instead of a thaw, you can easily perceive that the place must have fallen several hours beforehand, and then your minister, and the greater part of his congregation, would probably have been in the other world. Some there may be who deny providence altogether. I cannot conceive that there were any partakers of the scene who could have done so. This I know, if I had been an unbeliever to this day in the doctrine of the supervision and wise care of God, I must have been a believer in it at this hour. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together; he hath been very gracious unto us, and remembered us for good.

Now, when we look abroad into the world we see, as we think, such abundant proofs that there is a God, that we are apt to treat a man who denies the existence of a God with very little respect or patience. We believe him to be wilfully blind, for we see God's name so legible upon the very surface of creation, that we cannot have patience with him if he dares to deny the existence of a Creator. And in the matter of salvation: we have each of us seen in our own salvation such positive marks of the Lord's dealings with us, that we are apt to be somewhat censorious and harsh towards any who propound a doctrine which would teach salvation apart from God. And I think we shall be very apt this morning to think hardly of the man, who, having seen and heard of such a providence as that which I have just related, could fail to see God's hand. It seems to me that the hand of God in providence is as clear as in creation; and whilst I am sure that if saved at all I must be saved by God, I feel equally certain that every matter which concerns all of us in daily life, bears upon itself the evident trace of being the handiwork of Jehovah, our God. We must, if we would be true believers in God, and would avoid all Atheism, give unto him the kingship in the three kingdoms of creation, grace, and providence. It is in the last, however, that I think we are the most apt to forget him; we may easily see God in creation if we be at all enlightened, and if saved, we cannot avoid confessing that salvation is of the Lord alone. The very way in which we are saved, and the effect of grace in our hearts, always compels us to feel that God is just. But providence is such a chequered thing, and you and I are so prone to misjudge God and to come to rash conclusions concerning his dealings with us, that perhaps this is the greatest stronghold of our natural Atheism—a doubt of God's dealings with us in the arrangements of outward affairs. This morning I shall not be able to go deeply into the subject, but very heartily can I enter into it, after being so great a partaker of his wonder-working power.

From the text I shall draw one or two points. First of all, the text says, "the very hairs of our head are all numbered." From this I shall infer the *minuteness of providence*. Again, inasmuch as it is said of believers that the hairs of their head are all numbered, I shall infer the *kind consideration, the generous care, which God exercises over Christians*. And then, from the text, and from our Saviour's reason for uttering these words, I shall draw a *practical conclusion of what should be the spirit and temper of the men who believe this truth*—that the very hairs of their head are all numbered.

I. First, then, our text very clearly teaches us **THE MINUTENESS OF PROVIDENCE**. Every man can see providence in great things; it is very seldom that you find any person denying that when an avalanche falls from the summit of the Alps, the hand, the terrible hand of God is there. There are very few men who do not feel that God is present in the whirlwind, and in the storm. Most men will acknowledge that the earthquake, the hurricane, the devastation of war, and the ravages of pestilence, come from the hand of God. We find most men very willing to confess that God is God of the hills, but they forget that he is also Lord of the valleys. They will grant that he deals with great masses, but not with individuals; with seas in the bulk, but not with drops. Most men forget, however, that the fact which they believe of providence being in great things involves a providence in the little, for it were an inconsistent belief that the mass were in God's hand, whilst the atom was left to chance; it is indeed a belief that contradicts itself; we must believe all chance or else all God. We must have all ordained and arranged, or else we must have everything left to the wild whirlwind of chance and accident. But I believe that it is in little things that we fail to see God; therefore, it is to the little things that I call your attention this morning.

I believe my text means literally what it says. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." God's wisdom and knowledge are so great, that he even knows the number of the hairs upon our head. His providence descends to the minute

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particles of dust in the summer gale; he numbers the gnats in the sunshine, and the fishes in the sea. While it certainly doth control the massive orbs that shine in heaven, it doth not blush to deal with the drop that tricketh from the eye.

Now, I shall want you to notice, how little circumstances of daily life, when we come to put them all together, evidently betray their origin. I will take a Scripture history, and show how the little events must have been of God, as well as the great results. When Joseph was sent into Egypt by his brethren, in order to provide for them against a day of famine, we all agree with Joseph's declaration, "It was God that sent me hither." But now, if we notice each of the little ways through which this great result was brought to pass, we shall see God in each of them. One day, Joseph's brethren are gone out with the sheep; Jacob wants to send to them. Why does he send Joseph? He was his darling son; he loved him better than all his brethren. Why does he send him away? He sends him, however. Then why should it have happened at that particular time, that Jacob should want to send at all? However, he did want to send, and he did send Joseph. A mere accident you will say, but quite necessary as the basement of the structure. Joseph goes; his brethren are in want of pasture, and therefore leave Shechem, where Joseph expected to find them, and journey on to Dothan. Why go to Dothan? Was not the whole land before them? However Joseph goes there; he arrives at Dothan just when they are thinking of him and his dreams, and they put him into a pit. As they are about to eat bread, some Ishmaelites came by. Why did they come there at all? Why did they come at that particular time? Why were they going to Egypt? Why might they not have been going any other way? Why was it that the Ishmaelites wanted to buy slaves? Why might they not have been trading in some other commodity? However, Joseph is sold; but he is not disposed of on the road to Egypt, he is taken to the land. Why is it that Potiphar is to buy him? Why is it that Potiphar has a wife, at all? Why is it again, that Potiphar's wife should be so full of lust? Why should Joseph get into prison? How is it that the baker and the butler should offend their master? All chance, as the world has it, but every link necessary to make the chain. They do both offend their master; they are both put into prison. How is it that they both dream? How is it that Joseph interprets the dreams? How is it that the butler forgets him? Why, just because if he had recollected him, it would have spoiled it all. Why is it Pharaoh dreams? How can dreams be under the arrangement of God's providence? However, Pharaoh does dream; the butler then thinks of Joseph; Joseph is brought out of prison and taken before Pharaoh. But take away any of those simple circumstances, break any one of the links of the chain, and the whole of the design is scattered to the winds. You cannot get the machine to work; if any of the minute cogs of the wheels are taken away, everything is disarranged. I think it seems very clear to any man who will dissect not only that, but any other history he likes to fix upon, that there must be a God in the little accidents and dealings of daily life, as well as in the great results that tell upon the page of history, and are recounted in our songs. God is to be seen in little things.

We will now notice in the minutiae of providence, how *punctual* providence always is. You will never wonder more at providence, than when you consider how well God keeps time with himself. To return to our history—How is it that the Ishmaelites should come by just at the time? How many thousand chances there were that their journey might have been taken just before! There certainly was no special train to call at that station at that particular time, so that Joseph's brethren might arrange to go and call him. No such thing. And yet if there had been all this arrangement, it could not have happened better. You know Reuben intended to fetch Joseph out of the pit half an hour later, and "the child was not." God had these Ishmaelites ready: you do not know how he may have sped them on their journey, or delayed them, so as to bring them on the spot punctually at the identical moment.

To give another instance, there was a poor woman whose son had been raised from the dead by Elisha; she, however, had left her country at the time of famine, and had lost her estate. She wanted to get it back; God determined that she should have it. How was it to be done? The king sends for Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, and he talks to him: he tells him one instance about a woman who had had a child raised from the dead. How strange! in comes the woman herself. My lord, this is the woman; she comes to obtain her suit. Her desire is granted,

just because at the very moment the king's mind is interested concerning her. All chance, was it not? Nothing but chance? So fools say; but those who read Bibles, and those who have judgment, say there is something more than chance in such a coalition of circumstances. It could not be a mere coincidence, as men sometimes say; there must be God here, for it is harder to think that there is not God than that there is. And whilst a belief in God may be said by some to involve a great stretch of faith, the putting him out of such things as this, would involve an infinitely greater amount of credulity. No, there was God there.

There is another instance that I remember in the New Testament history. Paul goes into the temple, and the Jews rush upon him in a moment to kill him. They drag him out of the temple, and the doors are shut against him. They are just in the very act of killing him, and what is to become of poor Paul's life. Five minutes longer and Paul will be dead, when up comes the chief captain and delivers him. How was it that the chief captain knew of it? Very probably some young man of the crowd who knew Paul and loved him, ran to tell him. But why was it that the chief captain was at home? How was it that the ruler was able to come on a moment's emergency? How was it that he did come at all? It was only just a Hebrew, a man that was good for nothing, being killed. How was it that he came, and when he came the streets were full; there was a mob about Jerusalem? How did he come to the right street? How did he come at the exact nick of time? Say, "It is all chance!" I laugh at you; it is providence. If there be anything in the world that is plain to any man that thinks, it is plain that God

"Overrules all mortal things,
And manages our mean affairs."

But mark, that the running of the youth, and his arrival at the precise time, and the coming of the chief governor at the precise time, just proved the punctuality of Divine providence; and if God has a design that a thing shall happen at twelve, if you have appointed it for eleven, it shall not happen till twelve; and if he means it to be delayed till one, it is in vain that you propose any earlier or any later. God's punctuality in providence is always sure, and very often apparent.

Nor is it only in the minutes of time that we get an idea of the minuteness of providence, but it is in the use of little things. A sparrow has turned the fate of an empire. You remember the old story of Mohammed flying from his pursuers. He enters a cave, and a sparrow chirps at the entrance, and flies away as the pursuers pass. "Oh," say they "there is no fear that Mohammed is there, otherwise the bird would have gone a long while ago;" and the imposter's life is saved by a sparrow. We think, perhaps, that God directs the motions of the leviathan, and guides him in the sea, when he makes the deep to be hoary. Will we please to recollect, that the guidance of a minnow in its tiny pool, is as much in the hand of providence as the motion of the great serpent in the depths. You see the birds congregate in the autumn, ready for their flight across the purple sea. They fly hither and thither in strange confusion. The believer in providence holds that the wing of every bird has stamped upon it the place where it shall fly, and fly with never such vagaries of its own wild will, it cannot diverge so much as the millionth part of an inch from its predestinated track. It may whirl about, above, beneath,—east, west, north, south—wherever it pleases; still, it is all according to the providential hand of God. And although we see it not, it may be, that if that swallow did not take the precise track which it does take, something a little greater might be affected thereby; and again, something a little greater still might be affected, until at last a great thing would be involved in a little. Blessed is that man who seeth God in trifles! It is there that it is the hardest to see him; but he who believes that God is there, may go from the little providence up to the God of providence. Rest assured, when the fish in the sea take their migration, they have a captain and a leader, as well as the stars; for he who marshals the stars in their courses, and guides the planets in their march, is the master of the fly, and wings the bat, and guides the minnow, and doth not despise the tiniest of his creatures. You say there is predestination in the path of the earth; you believe that in the shining of the sun there is the ordinance of God; there is as much his ordinance in the creeping of an insect or in the glimmering of a glow-worm in the darkness. In nothing is there chance, but in everything there is a God. All things live

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and move in him, and have their being; nor could they live or move otherwise; for God hath so ordained them.

I hear one say, "Well, sir, you seem to be a fatalist!" No, far from it. There is just this difference between fate and providence. Fate is blind; providence has eyes. Fate is blind, a thing that must be; it is just a bow shot from an arrow, that must fly onward, but hath no target. Not so, providence; providence is full of eyes. There is a design in everything, and an end to be answered; all things are working together, and working together for good. They are not done because they must be done, but they are done because there is some reason for it. It is not only that the thing is, because it must be; but the thing is, because it is right it should be. God hath not arbitrarily marked out the world's history; he had an eye to the great architecture of perfection, when he marked all the aisles of history, and placed all the pillars of events in the building of time.

There is another thing that we have to recollect also, which will strike us perhaps more than the smallness of things. The minuteness of providence may be seen in the fact, that even the thoughts of men are under God's hand. Now, thoughts are things which generally escape our attention, when we speak of providence. But how much may depend upon a thought! Oftentimes a monarch has had a thought which has cost a nation many a bloody battle. Sometimes a good man has had a thought, which has been the means of rescuing multitudes from hell, and bearing thousands safely to heaven. Beyond a doubt, every imagination, every passing thought, every conception, that is only born to die, is under the hand of God. And in turning over the page of history, you will often be struck, when you see how great a thing has been brought about by an idle word. Depend upon it, then, that the will of man, the thought of man, the desire of man, that every purpose of man, is immediately under the hand of God. Take an instance—Jesus Christ is to be born at Bethlehem; his mother is living at Nazareth: he will be born there to a dead certainty. No, not so. Cæsar takes a whim into his head. All the world shall be taxed, and he will have all of them go to their own city. What necessity for that? Stupid idea of Cæsar's! If he had had a parliament, they would have voted against him. They would have said, "Why make all the people go to their own peculiar city to the census? Take the census where they live; that will be abundantly sufficient." "No," says he, "it is my will, and Cæsar cannot be opposed." Some think Cæsar mad. God knows what he means to do with Cæsar. Mary, great with child, must take a laborious journey to Bethlehem; and there is her child born in a manger. We should not have had the prophecy fulfilled, that Christ should be born at Bethlehem, and our very faith in the Messiah might have been shaken, if it had not been for that whim of Cæsar's. So that even the will of man; the tyranny, the despotism of the tyrant, is in the hand of God, and he turneth it whithersoever he pleaseth, to work his own will.

Gathering up all our heads into one short statement, it is our firm belief that he who wings an angel guides a sparrow. We believe that he who supports the dignity of his throne amidst the splendours of heaven maintains it also in the depths of the dark sea. We believe that there is nothing above, beneath, around, which is not according to the determination of his own counsel and will; and while we are not fatalists, we do most truly and sternly hold the doctrine, that God hath decreed all things whatsoever that come to pass, and that he overruleth all these things for his own glory and good; so that with Martin Luther, we can say,

"He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve his might;
His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light."

II. The second point is, THE KIND CONSIDERATION OF GOD, IN TAKING CARE OF HIS PEOPLE. In reading the text, I thought, "There is better care taken of me than I can take care of myself." You all take care of yourselves to some extent, but which of you ever took so much care of himself as to count the hairs of his head? But God will not only protect our limbs, but even the excrescence of hair is to be seen after. And how much this excels all the care of our tenderest friends! Look at the mother, how careful she is. If her child has a little cough, she notices it: the slightest weakness is sure to be observed. She has watched all its motions anxiously, to see whether it walked right, whether all its limbs were sound, and whether it had the use of all its powers in perfection; but she has

never thought of numbering the hairs of her child's head, and the absence of one or two of them would give her no great concern. But our God is more careful of us, even than a mother with her child—so careful that he numbers the hairs of our head. How safe are we, then, beneath the hand of God!

However, leaving the figure, let us again notice the kind, guardian care, which God exerts over his people in the way of providence. I have often been struck with the providence of God, in keeping his people alive before they were converted. How many are there here who would have been in hell at this hour, if some special providence had not kept them alive till the time of their conversion! I remember mentioning this in company, and almost every person in the room had some half-miracle to tell, concerning his own deliverance before conversion. One gentleman, I remember, was a sporting man, who afterwards became an eminent Christian. He told me, that a little time before his conversion he was shooting, and his gun burst in four pieces, which stood upright in the earth as near as possible in the exact form of a square, having been driven nearly a foot into the ground, while he stood there unharmed and quite safe, having scarcely felt the shock. I was noticing in Hervey's works, one day, a very pretty thought on this subject. He says, "Two persons who had been hunting together in the day, slept together the following night. One of them was renewing the pursuit in his dream, and, having run the whole circle of the chase, came at last to the fall of the stag; upon this he cries out with a determined ardour, *I'll kill him, I'll kill him*; and immediately feels for the knife which he carried in his pocket. His companion happening to awake, and observing what passed, leaped from the bed. Being secure from danger, and the moon shining in the room, he stood to view the event, when, to his inexpressible surprise, the infatuated sportsman gave several deadly stabs in the very place where a moment before the throat and the life of his friend lay.—This I mention, as a proof, that nothing hinders us, even from being assassins of others, or murderers of ourselves, amidst the mad sallies of sleep, only the preventing care of our Heavenly Father."

How wonderful the providence of God with regard to Christian people, in keeping them out of temptation. I have often noticed this fact, and I believe you are able to confirm it, that there are times when if a temptation should come you would be overtaken by it; but the temptation does not come. And at other times, when the temptation comes, you have supernatural strength to resist it. Yes! the best Christian in the world will tell you, that such is still the strength of his lust, that there are moments when if the object were presented to him, he would certainly fall into the commission of a foul sin; but then the object is not there, or there is no opportunity of committing the sin. At another time, when we are called to go through a burning fiery furnace of temptation, we have no desire towards the peculiar sin, in fact we feel an aversion to it, or are even incapable of it. Strange it is, but many a man's character has been saved by providence. The best man that ever lived, little knows how much he owes for preservation to the providence as well as to the grace of God.

How marvellously too has providence arranged all our places. I cannot but recur to my own personal history, for, after all, we are obliged to speak more of what we know of ourselves as matters of fact than of others. I shall always regard the fact of my being here to-day as a remarkable instance of providence. I should not have occupied this hall probably, and been blessed of God in preaching to multitudes if it had not been for what I considered an untoward accident. I should have been at this time studying in College, instead of preaching here, but for a singular circumstance which happened. I had agreed to go to College: the tutor had come to see me, and I went to see him at the house of a mutual friend; I was shown by the servant into one drawing-room in the house, he was shown into another. He sat and waited for me two hours; I sat and waited for him two hours. He could wait no longer, and went away thinking I had not treated him well; I went away and thought that he had not treated me well. As I went away this text came into my mind, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." So I wrote to say that I must positively decline; I was happy enough amongst my own country people, and got on very well in preaching, and I did not care to go to College. I have now had four years of labour. But, speaking after the manner of men, those who have been saved during that time would not have been saved, by my instrumentality at any rate, if it had not been for the remarkable providence turning the whole tenour of my thoughts, and putting things into a new track.

You have often had strange accidents like that. When you have resolved to do a thing, you could not do it any how; it was quite impossible. God turned you another way, and proved that providence is indeed the master of all human events.

And how good, too, has God been in providence to some of you, in providing your daily bread. It is remarkable how a little poverty makes a person believe in providence especially if he is helped through it. If a person has to live from hand to mouth, when day by day the manna falls, he begins to think there is a providence then. The gentleman who sows his broad acres, reaps his wheat and puts it into his barn, or takes his regular income, gets on so nicely that he can do without providence; he does not care a bit about it. The rents of his houses all come in, and his money in the Three per Centa. is quite safe—what does he want with providence? But the poor man who has to work at day labour, and sometimes runs very short, and just then happens to meet with somebody who gives him precisely what he wants, he exclaims, "Well, I know there is a providence—I cannot help believing it; these things could not have come by chance."

III. And now, in conclusion, brethren and sisters, if these things be so, if the hairs of our head are all numbered, and if providence provides for his people all things necessary for this life, and godliness, and arranges everything with infinite and unerring wisdom, what manner of persons ought we to be?

In the first place, we ought to be a bold race of people. What have we to fear? Another man looks up, and if he sees a lightning-flash, he trembles at its mysterious power. We believe it has its predestined path. We may stand and contemplate it; although we would not presumptuously expose ourselves to it, yet can we confide in our God in the midst of the storm. We are out at sea, the waves are dashing against the ship, she reels to and fro; other men shake, because they think this is all chance; we, however, see an order in the waves, and hear a music in the winds. It is for us to be peaceful and calm. To other men the tempest is a fearful thing; we believe that the tempest is in the hand of God. Why should we shake? Why should we quiver? In all convulsions of the world, in all temporal distress and danger, it is for us to stand calm and collected, looking boldly on. Our confidence should be very much the same, in comparison with the man who is not a believer in providence, as the confidence of some learned surgeon, who, when he is going through an operation, sees something very marvellous, but yet never shudders at it, while the ignorant peasant, who has never seen anything so wonderful, is alarmed and fearful, and even thinks that evil spirits are at work. We are to say—let others say what they please—"I know God is here, and I am his child, and this is all working for my good; therefore will not I fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

Especially may I address this remark to timid people. There are some of you who are frightened at every little thing. Oh! if you could but believe that God manages all, why, you would not be screaming because your husband is not home when there is a little thunder and lightning, or because there is a mouse in the parlour, or because there is a great tree blown down in the garden. There is no necessity you should believe that your brother-in-law, who has gone to Australia was wrecked, because there was a storm when he was at sea. There is no need for you to imagine, that your son in the army was necessarily killed, because he happened to be before Lucknow; or, if you think the thing necessary, still, as a believer in God's providence, you should just stand and say that God has done it, and it is yours to resign all things into his hands.

And I may say to those of you also who have been bereaved—If you believe in providence you may grieve; but your grief must not be excessive. I remember at a funeral of a friend hearing a pretty parable which I have told before, and will tell again. There was much weeping on account of the loss of a loved one, and the minister put it thus. He said, "Suppose you are a gardener employed by another; it is not your garden, but you are called upon to tend it, and you have your wages paid you. You have taken great care with a certain number of roses; you have trained them up, and there they are, blooming in their beauty. You pride yourself upon them. You come one morning into the garden, and you find that the best rose has been taken away. You are angry: you go to your fellow-servants, and charge them with having taken the rose. They will declare that they had nothing at all to do with it; and one says, 'I saw the master walking here this morning; I think he took it.' Is the gardener angry then? No, at once

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he says, "I am happy that my rose should have been so fair as to attract the attention of the master. It is his own: he hath taken it; let him do what seemeth him good."

It is even so with your friends. They wither not by chance; the grave is not filled by accident; men die according to God's will. Your child is gone, but the Master took it; your husband is gone, your wife is buried,—the Master took them; thank him that he let you have the pleasure of caring for them and tending them while they were here, and thank him that as he gave, he himself has taken away. If others had done it, you would have had cause to be angry; but the Lord has done it. Can you, then, murmur? Will you not say—

"Thee at all times will I bless;
Having thee I all possess;
How can I bereaved be,
Since I cannot part with thee."

And pardon me when I say, finally, that I think this doctrine, if fully believed, ought to keep us always in an equable frame of mind. One of the things we most want is, to have our equilibrium always kept up. Sometimes we are elated. If I ever find myself elated I know what is coming. I know that I shall be depressed in a very few hours. If the balance goes too much up, it is sure to come down again. The happiest state of mind is to be always on the equilibrium. If good things come, thank God for them; but do not set your heart upon them. If good things go, thank God that he has taken them himself, and still bless his name. Bear all. He who feels that everything cometh to pass according to God's will, hath a great main-stay to his soul. He need not be shaken to and fro by every wind that bloweth; for he is fast bound, so that he need not move. This is an anchor cast into the sea. While the other ships are drifting far away, he can ride calmly through.

Strive, dear friends, to believe this, and maintain as the consequence of it, that continual calm and peace which renders life so happy. Do not get fearing ills that may come to-morrow; either they will not come, or else they will bring good with them. If you have evils to-day, do not multiply them by fearing those of to-morrow. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Oh, I would to God, that some of you who are full of carking care and anxiety, could be delivered from it by a belief in providence; and when you once get into that quiet frame, which this doctrine engenders, you will be prepared for those higher exercises of communion and fellowship with Christ, to which distracting care is ever a fearful detriment, if not an entire preventive.

But as for you who fear not God, remember, the stones of the field are in league against you; the heavens cry to the earth and the earth answereth to the heavens, for vengeance upon you on account of your sins. For you there is nothing good, every thing is in rebellion against you. Oh that God might bring you into peace with him, and then you would be at rest with all beside. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." The Lord bless you in this, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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The Preacher.

No. XLVII.

HEARING GLADLY.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY, 31, 1858,

BY THE REV. HENRY MELVILL, B.D.,

(Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty, and Canon Residentiary of St. Paul's.)

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, LONDON.

"And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not."—Ezekiel xxxiii. 33.

THERE is something so striking in the circumstances of the well known narrative of Felix and Paul, that we are apt to overlook in comparison similar, and not less instructive accounts. St. Paul was a prisoner, and Felix was the Roman governor at whose disposal he absolutely lay; and every one looks with admiration on the intrepid apostle, as, disregarding the perilous position in which he stood, he declaimed against the very vices by which Felix was enslaved, and denounced Divine vengeance against the intemperate and the unrighteous. When, moreover, as the effect of his lofty eloquence, we read that Felix trembled—the judge trembled before the prisoner—the oppressor before the oppressed; the result is so surprising, so full of witness to the supremacy of truth, that the most careless hearer is arrested, and yields a passing homage to the majesty of innocence, as it confounds and abashes guilt. And then, who has not wondered and sorrowed at the remainder of the narrative—at the relation of how Felix overcame his convictions and settled back into a careless and profligate man, who often listened to Paul without being affected by his preaching, and detained him in prison in the base hope of being bribed to release him? We may justly say of the whole of the narrative, it could hardly fail to excite the interest and fix the attention of every one before whom it is brought, so that there is, comparatively, little danger that its facts will be unheeded, or the inferences which they furnish unobserved, even where practically there is a repetition of the incidents of the temporary conviction and the succeeding indifference. But it may happen, as we have already intimated, that the striking peculiarities of this narrative will prevent men paying much attention to accounts which are similar, though not, perhaps, adapted to take such hold on the imagination.

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tion. It is far from being a solitary narrative, if you consider it simply as a narrative of a present power of preaching, followed by no permanent effects. For example, in the the case of Herod as acted on by St. John, you have a very similar history to that of Felix rebuked by St. Paul. You read, "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." Our text, in bringing before us the case of Herod as acted on by St. John, presents us with a similar history to that of Felix rebuked by St. Paul. The history may not be conveyed in so remarkable a form, the related events may not address themselves so powerfully to the casual hearer, but we are inclined to think, that on the whole, it is the more singular of the two, furnishing the more cause for wonder, and the more material of instruction. We will dwell a little on the history, for, as you will presently see, it furnishes a most apt illustration of our text.

You must all remember the circumstances of the death of John the Baptist. Herod had formed an unlawful connection with the wife of his brother; and John, too faithful to allow vice to pass unrebuked amongst the great any more than in the mean, denounced the wickedness; and like St. Paul, with Felix, boldly told Herod of his crime. It does not appear that Herod himself was moved to any great anger by the remonstrance of the Baptist, but it is certain that he did not so hearken to that remonstrance as to repent of hissin; he persevered in the unlawful connection, perhaps owning in his heart its unlawfulness, and therefore disposed to shield his reprover, but too much enthralled by a guilty attachment to take the bold resolution of obeying his convictions. But the partner of his crime, equally reluctant to forsake the sin, was not equally willing to tolerate the rebuke. Herodias was fired with indignation against the preacher, who openly put her to shame, and longed and laboured for revenge. It tells much for the sincerity of Herod in the protection of St. John, that Herodias was obliged to cast about for methods of effecting the destruction of that herald of Christ. We cannot doubt that this imperious and bloodthirsty woman urged Herod to the putting John to death, beseeching him, by the affection that he professed for her, to gratify her revenge. But all to no purpose; Herod was perfectly assured that John had spoken only the truth, and done only right; and if he had not courage enough to abandon a favourite sin, he seems to have had conscience enough to determine that he would not at least add murder to adultery. Herodias, therefore, as you remember, had recourse to artifice. She sent her daughter to dance, upon a great festival, before Herod and the assembled lords of Galilee, thinking to fascinate Herod, and then to ensnare him into a promise. She succeeded but too well. Herod, enchanted by the gesture and grace of the damsel, swore to give her whatever she asked, even though her demand should reach the half of his kingdom. She acted under the direction of her mother, and asked, what was dearer to that revengeful woman than half of the empire—the head of John the Baptist in a charger. It tells again, in favour of Herod, that it sorely grieved him to hear this demand. He had professed himself ready to part with half his kingdom, but he was not ready to put John to death, though he had cast him into prison; and we infer that he would rather have been stripped of half his power than surrender his reprover into the hands of his enemies. He felt, however, what he ought not to have felt, that he was bound by his oath; as though it could have been a question of casuistry, whether a rash promise should be broken or

kept, by the beheading of an innocent man. It would hardly be uncharitable to think that Herod was not displeased to find himself in some sense obliged to order the execution of John, and, therefore, though secretly unwilling to be able to rid himself of a reprover. But, be this as it may, the device of Herodias prevailed, and he of whom prophets in far back ages had spoken, who had been born out of the ordinary course of nature, and who had gone before Messiah in the spirit and power of Elias, perished in a dungeon by the hands of the executioner; leaving his fate as a witness that they must prepare themselves for the worst persecution, who are intrepid enough to rebuke the vices of the great.

We take this review of the circumstances of the death of the Baptist, that you may learn that Herod, though a slave to his lusts, was not wholly insensible to the power of truth, but was rather in a measure influenced by his prisoner John, even as was Felix by his prisoner Paul. Nay, for this is the point to which we are most anxious to bring you, it seems to me that Herod went much beyond Felix. Their circumstances were similar, inasmuch as the two were guilty of the same crime, and were upbraided with it by a messenger from God. But Felix appears to have felt nothing more than a passing conviction—he trembled for a moment, and then settled into apathy; whereas John gained, it would seem, something like a lasting hold on Herod, and influenced him to the doing much, though not all that was faithfully prescribed. You gather this from the words already quoted from St. Mark, which sets Herod before you under a most extraordinary point of view. It is declared, that Herod feared John, and that too, on the very ground of his knowing that John was “a just man and a holy.” It is added, that “he observed him,” or gave heed, as the phrase may probably denote, to his example and his precepts. And this was not a marking, or a listening without any correspondent effect, for we next read, that “when he had heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly.” It is this last statement, a closely parallel statement to that of our text, which is full of interest and instruction, and which makes the case of Herod far more remarkable, as we think, than even that of Felix. We are not told of Felix that he ever did more than tremble; there is no register of his having taken any steps in consequence of his conviction. Not merely was he not induced by St. Paul’s reasoning on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, to put away Drusilla, but it does not appear that he made any correction whatsoever in his practice; at least, since he detained Paul in prison, in the hope of obtaining money for his release, it is evident that he remained a corrupt judge, and an unjust governor, as well as a hardened adulterer. It was not, however, the same with Herod; we are distinctly told “that he did many things”—did them (for this is the gist of the matter,) in consequence of what he heard from the Baptist; and although we are not informed precisely what those things were, we gather sufficiently from the office of him at whose bidding they were done, that they must have been things which accorded with the known will of God. Neither is this even the most remarkable respect in which the moral effect produced upon Herod transcended that of which Felix was the subject. You read that Felix trembled when he heard Paul preach. You hardly wonder that when the eloquence of such a man as the great apostle of the Gentiles was employed on so fearful a topic as that of judgment to come, he should have thrilled the guilty ruler, surrounded though he was by all the retinue of greatness, and forced from him tokens of

dread and perturbation. But you do not read that Herod trembled. You would have been prepared for that. The austere Baptist, who had lived in the wilderness, and whose very aspect was likely to strike awe into the profligate, might well have been expected to cause a guilty man like Herod to shrink back aghast, and to show by his agitation that the terrors of the last judgment were upon him. It is not so, however. You read only of Herod, that "he heard John gladly." "Gladly." What is the meaning of this? We look for fear—whence should come gladness? And thus you must all see that the case of Herod is a most accurate illustration of what is alleged in our text, except, indeed, that it goes still further, inasmuch as Herod not only listened to John, but did, in a measure, the things which were prescribed; and however you set aside his doing many things, and confine yourselves to the gladness which is derived from his preaching, you still have the precise case sketched in our text. Here is a stern and vehement preacher, who, like Ezekiel, denounces wickedness and threatens wrath; and the hearer, in place of being either awed into repentance, or appalled by the remonstrance, or even chilled into indifference, derives a sort of pleasurable excitement from the tragic and dolorous harangue. You cannot say to the Baptist, 'Thou art unto Herod a terror, or a fear, or a burden.' Herod heard him gladly. What then? You can only say, "Lo, thou art unto him as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument."

Now you will see why we dwelt so long on the case of Herod. There was to a certain extent, a close resemblance between the Baptist and Ezekiel. Both were stern preachers, charged with messages of woe and tribulation. In no part of the Bible do you find severer or more vehement denunciations than in the writings of Ezekiel; and you might have expected that they who sat and heard his terrific invective would, if not led to the forsaking evil ways, have at least avoided for the future listening to what was so harsh and so repulsive. And yet it was not so. The impenitent flocked in crowds to hearken to the prophet; there was something of excitement in his wild and withered oratory; and it was just the same as if they had gathered round a musician of magnificent power and exquisite taste—they were carried away by the eloquence as they might have been by the melody, there was a hold on the imagination, though none on the conscience; and the orator whose whole aim it was to rouse men to contrition and amendment, virtually did nothing but help his hearers to wile away an hour which might otherwise have hung heavily upon their hands. They heard Ezekiel gladly, just as Herod heard John; but there was a gladness which had nothing to do with the joy of the penitent who forsakes his evil ways and finds acceptance with God. And we wish to speak to you with all faithfulness on a case which is thus proved possible, if not common; the case of persons who may derive pleasure from the preaching of the gospel, and yet not be moved by it to the abandoning their sins. Indeed, we believe that there may be not only the cases amongst us which go as far as these two cases, but those which go further; cases in which not only is the word heard gladly, but in which, as with Herod, many things are done in consequence of what is heard, though men stop short of what the gospel requires. A sense of uneasiness under powerful rebukes, a wish to be able in some measure to prove to themselves that they are not utterly indifferent to repeated remonstrances, may cause the hearers to avoid certain things which the preacher denounces, and to attempt certain things which the preacher pre-

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scribes. Then there is the fear of man, which operates so largely where there is power to injure, and where even there is only power to threaten and rebuke. Do I not know, that it is a distressing thing for those who sit about us, in one of our weekly assemblings, to hear denunciations of faults, to which they feel themselves prone? and if there be so clear a delineation of any particular case, that an individual might fancy he had been sitting for a portrait, will not that individual be as though he sat upon thorns, imagining that all around were applying the description, and recognizing the likeness? And why should I not think, that merely out of fear of these cutting reproofs, parties may be induced to attempt certain reforms? Not that they are actually in dread of the judgment of God, but that they have a dislike to the remonstrance of men, and would fain stand well with their fellow-creatures, although as yet they are almost indifferent as to how they stand with God. I care not, whether it be through the energy of addresses which you hear from the pulpit, or the workings of conscience which is roused through some other instrumentality; but this we are persuaded of, that there may be many of you stirred, like Herod, to the going to a certain point in reformation, but, like Herod, stop short of genuine repentance. They give up one thing after another, according as conscience is more or less urgent; but the favourite practice, the darling passion, this still retains its mastery, whilst less cherished habits are broken, and less powerful desires are repressed. The man whose master-passion is covetousness, may become most rigidly moral, though he had not heretofore been distinguished by purity of life; but the increased morality, in place of being attended with diminished covetousness, may be only a make weight with conscience against the abiding and even the growing eagerness for gain. The man, again, whose master-passion is sensuality, may give much in alms to the poor, though he had previously been accounted penurious; but is he thus necessarily less the slave of his lust? Ah, no. He may only have bought himself peace in the indulgence of his appetites by liberality in relieving the destitute. It is the same in the case of every other master-passion. Until it be that passion that is withstood, until it be Heredias that is put away, there is no evidence of genuine repentance; all that is surrendered may be nothing more than a proof of the value which is put upon that which is retained. And if you would discriminate between reformation and repentance, if you would know whether you have limited yourselves to the former, and are yet strangers to the latter, examine what it is you keep, rather than what it is you give up.

We feel, however, that we are thus somewhat travelling beyond the precise case which is sketched in our text. We have rather been showing you that, as in the instance of Herod, men may even go beyond what is alleged of the Jews; they may not only have pleasure in hearing, they may even, up to a certain point, make an attempt at obeying. Come, now, we will confine ourselves more closely to the questions before us. You have the Jews thronging round Ezekiel—thronging in their impenitence, thronging in their determined adherence to their idolatries and their vices, and the prophet is not sparing in his denunciations, and is not prophecying smooth things, saying, "peace, peace, where there is no peace." Well, then, are the Jews painfully affected, since they are resolved to give no heed to Ezekiel? Do they not at least turn away in insolence and disgust, resolving that they will never listen again to the ravings of so wild an enthusiast? Nothing of the kind. There they sit, like fascinated things; they come again and again, as to an intel-

lectual treat, or to a fine ebullition of genius, and God Almighty has to say—and here is what we must consider and account for—God Almighty has to say to this stern messenger of woe, a messenger from whom you might have thought the cold and the careless would have instinctively shrunk—"Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument."

Now, we turn again to the illustration of the cases of Felix and Herod. We have already shown you that Herod went far beyond Felix, in that he "did many things," whereas we have no reason to think that the Roman governor attempted any reform whatsoever at the bidding of St. Paul; but perhaps the contrast is yet stronger in reference to the immediate effect which preaching produced, and the generality of men will be more struck at observing that Herod heard John gladly, whilst Felix trembled at the reasoning of St. Paul. It was just the same with the Jews; they heard Ezekiel gladly, he was "unto them a very lovely song." Now, what are we to say to this! Why, there was a power in the prophet, as there was in the Baptist, of exciting the torpid feelings of jaded voluptuaries; and though from the nature of the case we might have expected he could excite only painful emotions, yet there may have been pleasure in the being excited at all, which would render the depraved people willing auditors of the unflinching preacher. We suppose that the exact parallel is of frequent occurrence in our own day. We do not believe, that if a minister be mighty in the setting forth the terrors of the Lord, so that he can make the retinue of judgment pass in almost visible procession, and describe with such vividness the portion of his hearers, if they are found amongst the lost, that they shall seem to witness their deep anguish and to catch their own wild cry—we do not believe that if a minister who is thus powerful in delineating the wrath of the Almighty, were to take that wrath for his subject Sunday after Sunday, he would thin his church of those who have most cause to dread the wrath—we rather believe that it would be increasingly thronged by eager listeners, who, so far from being repelled by his known energy in making men tremble, would come for the very purpose of being made to tremble. There was a very distinguished French preacher, who composed a magnificent and overpowering sermon on the Last Judgment, the celebrity of which caused him frequently to deliver it; and whenever it was known that this sermon would be preached, the whole city was stirred, and men of all classes and of all vices rushed eagerly to the church. They went, knowing what they were to hear, and what effect they were to look for, even as the spectators of a tragedy, who are all in possession of the plot and the dialogue, and can tell you beforehand, where they may be expected to weep, and where to shake with fear. And, therefore, so far from supposing any inconsistency between the trembling of Felix and the gladness of Herod, or Ezekiel being to the Jews as one who could play upon an instrument, we can think that these latter feelings were but accompaniments of the trembling. Neither party was touched at the heart by the prophet's denunciations. For then Herod would not have felt gladness, but sorrow and contrition; and Ezekiel would not have been to the Jews as a very lovely song; but there was an excitement to the animal feelings, and this was a pleasure, and men were glad of its repetition. I should have augured better for Herod had he not heard John gladly, and for the Jews had Ezekiel's oratory not been to them as the music of a very skilful player—had both parties shrunk from

HEARING GLADLY.

the intrepid reprovcr, in place of deriving a sort of gratification from his reproofs. There are none, for whose safety we have stronger apprehensions than those who, remaining unconverted, can attend with a measure of complacency the ministrations of the preacher, who is frequent and fervent in denouncing vengeance against every act of unrighteousness. There is nothing to be said for their complacency, but that it just results from a passion for excitement, for which they seek indulgence and find gratification in the preacher's harangue, so that they literally draw a temporary pleasure from their own future misery, and convert their final doom into an engine for giving a passing impulse to their torpid sensibilities. I do pray you, therefore, to take heed how you ever confound the being interested in preaching with the being interested in the things preached; and if as a preacher pours all his vehemence on the dread tidings of coming wrath, you are conscious to yourselves of an emotion of fear, and the very blood seems to curdle at the heart, do not conclude from this your felt terror that you are possessed of a just awe of the judgments of God; and yet more, do not imagine, from the finding that you can come with pleasure, week after week, to hear discourses on the vengeance which will overtake the impenitent, that you must yourselves have sought shelter from the threatened visitation; rather remember, that all your fear may be nothing more than the fear which a well-wrought fiction might easily produce, and that all your pleasure may be simply that which results from the excitement of the feelings. Yea, remember for your warning, that even when the preacher was a prophet who sketched with surpassing power the dreadfulncss of lying exposed to God's wrath, and the audience were men who persisted in sins which could not fail to insure the visitation of that wrath—I beg you to remember, that the effects of the preaching are thus described by the Almighty—"Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not."

Now, once more. Though in the main, Ezekiel's preaching was stern and alarming, it sometimes assumed a gentler character. In the very chapter which contains our text, hear the beautiful words—"As I live, saith the Lord of Hosts, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" And in the following chapters there are glorious and consolatory promises; descriptions of the restoration of Israel, and of the gathering of a universal church unto the Lord our Redeemer. Perhaps it ought in a measure to be ascribed to such portions of his preaching as these that Ezekiel was to the Jews as a very lovely song. We have, indeed, been anxious to warn you against what we think a very possible result of ministrations, whose direct influence it is to make men tremble, and which succeed in that object, because you are made to tremble, and because, so far from shrinking at a repetition of the process, you can come with eagerness to God's house and submit yourselves to the same energetic and overcoming influence, you may easily fancy that you have a just apprehension of God's wrath, and feel that you have duly prepared yourselves against a day, of whose terrors you can hear with something of pleasurable emotion. Therefore, we labour to show you that there may be a complacency and a gladness beneath the preaching of the word, when that preaching is a preaching of vengeance, which are wholly unconnected with any effort to escape from what is threatened, but which quite consist with the remaining exposed to it, from no shelter against its

fury, and with really no real dread of its coming. But if the preaching take a different turn, and there be interspersed with the descriptions of vengeance descriptions of the privileges and portions of the believer in Christ, how easily on insufficient grounds, they may take these privileges as their own! Here, indeed, it is that Ezekiel may have been to his hearers as "a very lovely song." If a man has but persuaded himself, without good reason, of his own conversion and security, every description of hell may give him pleasure, as showing him what he has escaped; and every description of heaven, as showing him what joys he shall possess. There is nothing needed, but that a man work himself into the notion of his being a believer, and it may be a source of the greatest satisfaction itself to him to attend the ministrations of the word, and then this satisfaction will just help to confirm him in his delusion, seeming like a proof that he has a spiritual perception, and enjoys spiritual truths. Therefore it is a matter of prime moment, that we warn all our hearers against the inferring that they have undergone a moral change, from the finding that they have pleasure in listening to the gospel. If converted, they *will* listen with pleasure; but they may listen with pleasure, and, nevertheless, be far from the kingdom of God. Herod heard John, and the Jews heard Ezekiel, gladly; yet the former had not put away Herodias, nor the latter their idols.

We have not space to go into all the producing causes of this false gladness; but we have said enough to set those who feel interested in preaching, and who may be disposed to take the feeling as an evidence of conversion, on the careful examining whether or no they are not deceiving themselves, and whether their gladness ought not to be their sorrow. There is many an enthusiastic lover of music, who mistakes for piety and religious emotion, the feelings of which he is conscious, as the sacred anthem comes pealing down the aisle of a cathedral, just because he feels an elevation of soul and a kindling of heart. As on a tide of melody poured forth from a choired orchestra there comes floating to him the psalmody of the sweet singer of Israel, he will imagine that he has really an affection towards spiritual things, and really aspires after heaven. Alas! alas! though music may indeed be an auxiliary to devotion, it proves no devotion, that you can be thrilled and lifted out of yourselves by the power of music. It is altogether on your natural feelings or sensibilities, which may or may not be drawn out by religion, that the lofty strain tells with so subduing an effect; and even when you are most carried away and overcome by the varied notes, I see no reason whatsoever, why you might not return from the oratorio of the "Creation" and ascribe the universe to chance, or from that of the "Messiah" and be ready with the Jews to crucify the Christ. It is the same with preaching. The eloquence of Ezekiel was stern and severe; it was commonly employed on wrath and calamity, yet, "thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." You may, then, alternately tremble and soar, and weep and exult, as the preacher discourses on the various truths of the Bible; but you are not to take this as any necessary evidence that the truths themselves have power over your souls. You must judge of this power by what you are out of church, when there is not the stimulus of the sermon. You must read it in the sermon of your own lives, in subdued lusts, vanquished passions, undertaken duties. Do not form your opinion of yourself in church, when excitement may pass for piety, or the gladness of the hypocrite for that of the believer. Get your information in church, and then go home to apply it in deciding your condition. Oh, what may a minister become, when men have heard gladly, and yet remain unconverted! Ye who are yet fast bound in the fetters of sin, persist in wickedness, and thus do your part towards wearing down those who have watched for your souls, as they that may give account, and the memory of what you now hear gladly, but vainly, may haunt you, when there is no place for repentance; and the minister may rise before you as an accusing spirit, and what has been to you "as a very lovely song" justify your being sentenced to the weeping and gnashing of teeth. May God avert this from us all, through Jesus Christ!

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE REDEEMER'S PRAYER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 18TH, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundations of the world."—John xvii. 24.

WHEN the High Priest of old entered into the most holy place, he kindled the incense in his censer, and waving it before him, he perfumed the air with its sweet fragrance, and veiled the mercy seat with the denseness of its smoke. Thus was it written concerning him, "He shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail: and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not." Even so our Lord Jesus Christ, when he would once for all enter within the vail with his own blood to make an atonement for sin, did first offer strong crying and prayers. In this 17th chapter of John, we have, as it were, the smoking of the Saviour's pontifical censer. He prayed for the people for whom he was about to die, and ere he sprinkled them with his blood, he did sanctify them with his supplications. This prayer therefore stands pre-eminent in Holy Writ as *the Lord's Prayer*—the special and peculiar prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ; and "if," as an old divine hath it, "it be lawful to prefer one Scripture above another, we may say, though all be gold, yet this is a pearl in the gold; though all be like the heavens, this is as the sun and stars." Or if one part of Scripture be more dear to the believer than any other, it must be this which contains his Master's last prayer before he entered through the rent vail of his own crucified body. How sweet it is to see that not himself, but his people, constituted the staple of his prayer! He did pray for himself—he said, "Father, glorify thou me!" but while he had one prayer for himself, he had many for his people. Continually did he pray for them—"Father, sanctify them!" "Father, keep them!" "Father, make them one!" And then he concluded his supplication with, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." Melancthon well said there was never a more excellent, more holy, more fruitful, and more affectionate voice ever heard in heaven or in earth, than this prayer.

We shall first notice *the style of the prayer*; secondly, *the persons interested in it*; and thirdly, *the great petitions offered*—the last head constituting the main part of our discourse.

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I. First, notice THE STYLE OF THE PRAYER—it is singular: It is, “Father, *I will*.” Now, I cannot but conceive that there is something more in the expression, “*I will*,” than a mere wish. It seems to me, that when Jesus said “*I will*,” although perhaps it might not be proper to say that he made a demand, yet we may say that he pleaded with authority, asking for that which he knew to be his own, and uttering an “*I will*” as potent as any fiat that ever sprang from the lips of the Almighty. “Father, *I will*.” It is an unusual thing to find Jesus Christ saying to God, “*I will*.” You know that before the mountains were brought forth, it was said of Christ, “in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do *thy will*, O God;” and we find whilst he was on earth, that he never mentioned his own will; that he expressly declared, “I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.” It is true you do hear him when addressing men, saying “*I will*,” for he saith, “*I will*, be thou clean;” but in his prayers to his Father he prayed with all humility;

“With sighs and groans he offered up,
His humble suit below.”

“*I will*,” therefore, seems to be an exception to the rule; but we must remember that Christ was now in an exceptional condition. He had never been before where he was now. He was now come to the end of his work; he could say, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,” and therefore, looking forward to the time when the sacrifice would be complete and he should ascend on high, he sees that his work is done, and takes his own will back again and saith, “Father, *I will*.”

Now, mark, that such a prayer as this would be totally unbecoming in our lips. We are never to say, “Father, *I will*.” Our prayer is to be, “Not my will, but thine be done.” We are to mention our *wishes*, but our *wills* are to subside into the will of God. We are to feel that whilst it is ours to desire, it is God’s to will. But how pleasant, I repeat, it is to find the Saviour pleading with such authority as this, for this puts the stamp of certainty upon his prayer. Whatsoever he has asked for in that chapter he shall have beyond a doubt. At other times, when he pleaded as a Mediator, in his humility he was eminently successful in his intercessions; how much more shall his prayer prevail now that he takes to himself his great power, and with authority cries, “Father, *I will*.” I love that opening to the prayer, it is a blessed guarantee of its fulfilment, rendering it so sure that we may now look upon Christ’s prayer as a promise which shall be assuredly fulfilled.

II. Thus much concerning the style of the prayer; and now we NOTICE THE PERSONS FOR WHOM HE PRAYED, “Father, *I will* that *they also, whom thou hast given me*, be with me where I am.” This was not an universal prayer. It was a prayer including within it a certain class and portion of mankind, who are designated as “those whom the Father had given him.” Now we are taught to believe that God the Father did, from before the foundation of the world, give unto his Son Jesus Christ a number whom no man can number, who were to be the reward of his death, the purchase of the travail of his soul; who were to be infallibly brought unto everlasting glory by the merits of his passion, and the power of his resurrection. These are the people here referred to. Sometimes in Scripture they are called the elect, because when the Father gave them to Christ he chose them out from among men. At other times they are called the beloved, because God’s love was set upon them of old. They are called Israel; for like Israel of old, they are a chosen people, a royal generation. They are called God’s inheritance, for they are especially dear to God’s heart; and as a man careth for his inheritance and his portion, so the Lord careth especially for them.

Let me not be misunderstood. The people whom Christ here prays for, are those whom God the Father out of his own free love and sovereign good pleasure ordained unto eternal life, and who, in order that his design might be accomplished, were given into the hands of Christ the Mediator, by him to be redeemed, sanctified, and perfected, and by him to be glorified everlastingly. These people, and none others, are the object of our Saviour’s prayer. It is not for me to defend the doctrine; it is Scriptural, that is my only defence. It is not for me to vindicate God from any profane charge of partiality or injustice. If there be any wicked enough to impute this to him, let them settle the matter with their Maker. Let the thing

formed, if it have arrogance enough, say to him that formed it, "Why hast thou made me thus?" I am not God's apologist; he needs no defender. "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Hath he not, like the potter, power over the clay, to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?" Instead of disputing, let us enquire who are these people? Do we belong to them? Oh! let each heart now put the solemn query, "Am I included in that happy throng whom God the Father gave to Christ? Beloved, I cannot tell you by the mere hearing of your names; but if I know your character, I can tell you decisively—or rather, you will need no telling, for the Holy Spirit will bear witness in your hearts that you are amongst the number. Answer this question—Have you given yourselves to Christ? Have you been brought, by the constraining power of his own free love, to make a voluntary surrender of yourself to him? Have you said, "O Lord, other lords have had dominion over me; but now I reject them, and I give myself up to thee.

'Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on thee;'

and as I have no other refuge, so I have no other Lord. Little am I worth; but such as I am, I give all I have and all I am to thee. It is true, I was never worth thy purchasing; but since thou hast bought me, thou shalt have me. Lord, I make a full surrender of myself to thee." Well, soul, if thou hast done this, if thou hast given thyself to Christ, it is but the result of that ancient grant made by Jehovah to his son long ere the worlds were made. And, once again, canst thou feel to-day that thou art Christ's? If thou canst not remember the time when he sought thee and brought thee to himself, yet canst thou say with the spouse, "I am my beloved's?" Can you now from your inmost soul say, Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee! If so, trouble not your minds about election; there is nothing troublesome in election to you. He that believes is elected, he who is given to Christ now, was given to Christ from before the foundation of the world. You need not dispute divine decrees, but sit down and draw honey out of this rock, and wine out of this flinty rock. Oh, it is a hard, hard doctrine to a man who has no interest in it, but when a man has once a title to it, then it is like the rock in the wilderness; it streams with refreshing water whereat myriads may drink and never thirst again. Well does the Church of England say of that doctrine, it "is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons." And though it be like the Tarpeian rock, whence many a malefactor has been dashed to pieces in presumption, yet it is like Pisgah, from whose lofty summit the spires of heaven may be seen in the distance. Again, I say, be not cast down, neither let your hearts be disconsolate. If you be given to Christ now, you are among the happy number for whom he intercedes above, and you shall be gathered amongst the glorious throng, to be with him where he is, and to behold his glory.

III. I very briefly pass over these two points, because I desire to dwell upon the third, which is, THE PETITIONS WHICH THE SAVIOUR OFFERS.

Christ prayed, if I understand his prayer, for three things—things which constitute Heaven's greatest joy, Heaven's sweetest employment, and Heaven's highest privilege.

1. The first great thing he prayed for, is that which is *heaven's greatest joy*—"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." If you notice, every word in the sentence is necessary to its fulness. He does not say—"I pray that those, whom thou hast given me, may be where I am;" but, "*with me* where I am." And he does not only pray that they might be *with him*, but that they might be with him in the same place *where he is*. And mark! he did not say he wished his people to be in heaven, but with him in heaven, because that makes heaven heaven. It is the very pith and marrow of heaven to be with Christ. Heaven without Christ would be but an empty place; it would lose its happiness; it would be a harp without strings; and where would be the music?—a sea without water, a very pool of Tantalus. He prayed then that we might be with Christ—that is our companionship; with him where he is—that is our position. It seems as if he would tell us, that heaven is both a condition and a state—in the company of Christ, and in the place where Christ is.

I might, if I chose, enlarge very much on these points, but I just throw out the raw material of a few thoughts, that will furnish you with topics of meditation in

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the afternoon. Let us now pause and think how sweet this prayer is, by contrasting it with our attainments on earth. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." Ah! brothers and sisters, we know a little of what it is to be with Christ. There are some happy moments, sweet pauses between the din of the continued battles of this wearied life there are some soft times, like couches of rest, wherein we do repose. There are hours when our Master comes to us, and makes us, or ever we are aware, like the chariots of Amminadib. It is true, we have not been caught up to the third heaven, like Paul, to hear words which it is unlawful for us to utter; but we have sometimes thought that the third heavens have come down to us. Sometimes I have said within myself, "Well, if this be not heaven, it is next door to it," and we have thought that we were dwelling in the suburbs of the celestial city. You were in that land, which Bunyan calls the land Beulah. You were so near to heaven, that the angels did flit across the stream and bring you sweet bunches of myrrh, and bundles of frankincense, which grow in the beds of spices on the hills, and you pressed these to your heart and said with the spouse, "A bundle of myrrh, is my well beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts," for I am ravished with his love, and filled with his delights. He hath made himself near to me, he hath unveiled his countenance and manifested all his love. But, beloved, while this gives us a foretaste of heaven, we may nevertheless use our state on earth as a complete contrast to the state of the glorified above. For here, when we see our Master, it is but at a distance. We are sometimes we think in his company, but still we cannot help feeling that there is a great gulf fixed between us, even when we come the nearest to him. We talk, you know, about laying our head upon his bosom, and sitting at his feet; but alas! we find it after all to be very metaphorical, compared with the reality which we shall enjoy above. We have seen his face, we trust we have sometimes looked into his heart, and tasted that he is gracious, but still long nights of darkness lay between us. We have cried again and again with the bride, "Oh, that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised. I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate." We were with him, but still he was in an upper-room of the house, and we below; we were with him, but still we felt that we were absent from him, even when we were the nearest to him.

Again, even the sweetest visits from Christ, how short they are! Christ comes and goes very much like an angel; his visits are few and far between with the most of us, and oh! so short—alas, too short for bliss. One moment our eyes see him, and we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, but again a little time and we do not see him, our beloved withdraws himself from us; like a roe or a young hart he leaps over the mountain of division; he is gone back to the land of spices, and feeds no more among the lilies.

"If to-day he deigns to bless us,
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He to-morrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within."

Oh, how sweet the prospect of the time when we shall not see him at a distance, but face to face. There is a sermon in those words, "face to face." And then we shall not see him for a little time, but

"Millions of years our wondering eyes,
Shall o'er our Saviour's beauties rove;
And myriad ages we'll adore,
The wonders of his love."

Oh, if it is sweet to see him now and then, how sweet to gaze on that blessed face for aye, and never have a cloud rolling between, and never have to turn one's eyes away to look on a world of weariness and woe! Blest days! when shall ye come, when our companionship with Christ shall be close and uninterrupted?

And let us remark, again, that when we get a glimpse of Christ, many step in to interfere. We have our hours of contemplation, when we do draw near to

Jesus, but alas! how the world steps in and interrupts even our most quiet moments—the shop, the field, the child, the wife, the head, perhaps the very heart, all these are interlopers between ourselves and Jesus. Christ loves quiet; he will not talk to our souls in the busy market place, but he says, “Come, my love, into the vineyard, get thee away into the villages, there will I show thee my love.” But when we go to the villages, behold the Philistine is there, the Canaanite has invaded the land. When we would be free from all thought except thought of Jesus, the wandering band of Bedouin thoughts come upon us, and they take away our treasures, and spoil our tents. We are like Abraham with his sacrifice; we lay out the pieces ready for the burning, but foul birds come to feast on the sacrifice which we desire to keep for our God and for him alone. We have to do as Abraham did; “When the birds came down upon the sacrifice, Abraham drove them away.” But in heaven there shall be no interruption, no weeping eyes shall make us for a moment pause in our vision; no earthly joys, no sensual delights, shall create a discord in our melody; there shall we have no fields to till, no garment to spin, no wearied limb, no dark distress, no burning thirst, no pangs of hunger, no weepings of bereavement; we shall have nought to do or think upon, but for ever to gaze upon that Sun of Righteousness, with eyes that cannot be blinded, and with a heart that can never be weary; to lie in those arms for ever; throughout a whole eternity to be pressed to his bosom, to feel the beatings of his ever faithful heart; to drink his love; to be satisfied for ever with his favour, and full with the goodness of the Lord! Oh! if we have only to die to get to such delights as these,—death is gain, it is swallowed up in victory.

Nor must we turn away from the sweet thought, that we are to be with Christ where he is, until we have remembered, that though we often draw near to Jesus on earth, yet the most we ever have of him, is but a sip of the well. We sometimes come to the wells of Elim and the seventy palm trees, but when sitting beneath the palm trees, we feel that it is just like an oasis; to-morrow we shall have to be treading the burning sands, with the scorching sky above us. One day we sit down and we drink from the sweet soft spring; to-morrow we know that we have to be standing with parched lips over Marah's fount, and crying, “Alas, alas! it is bitter; I cannot drink thereof.” But oh, in heaven, we shall do what holy Rutherford says, we shall put the well head to our lips and drink right on from that well that never can be drained, we shall drink to our souls utmost full. Ay, as much of Jesus as the finite can hold of infinity shall the believer receive. We shall not then see him for the twinkling of an eye and then lose him, but we shall see him ever. We shall not eat of manna that shall be like a small round thing, a coriander seed, but the manna whereof we feed shall be mountains, the broad hills of food; there we shall have rivers of delight, and oceans of ecstatic joy. Oh, it is very hard for us to tell, with all that we can guess of heaven, how large, how deep, how high, how broad it is. When Israel ate of that one fair branch which came from Eshcol, they guessed what the clusters of Canaan must be; and when they tasted the honey they guessed the sweetness. But I warrant no man in all that host, had any idea of how full that land was of fertility and sweetness; how the very brooks ran with honey, and the very rocks did teem with fatness. Nor can any of us who have lived the nearest to our Master, form more than the faintest guess of what it is to be with Jesus where he is.

Now all that is wanted to help my feeble description of being with Jesus, is this—if you have faith in Christ, just think over this fact, that in a few more months you will know more about it than the wisest mortal ere can tell. A few more rolling suns, and you and I shall be in heaven. Go on, O Time! with thy swiftest pinions fly! A few more years, and I shall see his face. O canst thou say, my hearer, “I shall see his face?” Come, thou grey-headed one, nearing the goal of life, canst thou with confidence say, “I know that my Redeemer liveth?” If thou canst say that, it will fill thy soul with joy. I can never think of it without being moved to tears. To think that this head shall wear a crown; that these poor fingers shall strike the harp-strings of everlasting song; that this poor lip, which now faintly tells the wonders of redeeming grace, shall join with cherubim and seraphim, and rival them in melody. Is it not too good to be true? Does it not seem sometimes as if the very greatness of the thought overwhelmed our faith? But true it is; and though too great for us to receive it, it is not too great for God to give. We shall be with him where he is. Yes, John; thou laidst thy head upon thy Saviour's bosom once, and I have oftentimes envied thee; but I shall

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have thy place by-and-bye. Yes, Mary; it was thy sweet delight to sit at thy Master's feet, while Martha was cumbered with her much serving. I, too, am too much cumbered with this world; but I shall leave my Martha's cares in the tomb, and sit to hear thy Master's voice. Yes, O spouse, thou didst ask to be kissed with the kisses of his lips, and what thou askedst for, poor humanity shall yet see. And the poorest, meanest, and most illiterate of you, who have trusted in Jesus, shall yet put your lip to the lip of your Saviour, not as Judas did, but with a true "Hail, Master!" you shall kiss him. And then, wrapp'd in the beams of his love, as a dim star is eclipsed in the sunlight, so shall you sink into the sweet forgetfulness of ecstasy, which is the best description we can give of the joys of the redeemed. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." That is heaven's sweetest joy,—to be with Christ.

2. And now the next prayer is, "that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." This is *heaven's sweetest employment*. I doubt not there are many joys in heaven which will amplify the grand joy with which we have just started; I feel confident that the meeting of departed friends, the society of apostles, prophets, priests, and martyrs, will amplify the joy of the redeemed. But still the sun that will give them the greatest light to their joy, will be the fact that they are with Jesus Christ and behold his face. And now there may be other employments in heaven, but that mentioned in the text is the chief one. "That they may behold my glory." O for the tongue of angels! O for the lip of Cherubim! for one moment to depict the mighty scenes which the Christian shall behold when he seeth the glory of his Master, Jesus Christ! Let us pass as in a panorama before your eyes the great scenes of glory which you shall behold after death. The moment the soul departs from this body, it will behold the glory of Christ. The glory of his person will be the first thing that will arrest our attention. There will he sit in the midst of the throne, and our eyes will first be caught with the glory of his appearance. Perhaps we shall be struck with astonishment. Is this the visage that was more marred than that of any man? Are these the hands that once rude iron tore? Is that the head that once was crowned with thorns. Oh, how shall our admiration rise, and rise, and rise to the very highest pitch, when we shall see him who was—

"The weary man, and full of woes,
The humble man before his foes,"

now King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. What! are those fire-darting eyes the very eyes that once wept over Jerusalem? Are those feet shod with sandals of light, the feet that once were torn by the flinty acres of the Holy Land? Is that the man, who scarred and bruised was carried to his tomb? Yes, 'tis he. And that shall absorb our thoughts—the godhead and the manhood of Christ; the wondrous fact that he is God over all blessed for ever, and yet man, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. And when for an instant we have noted this, I doubt not the next glory we shall see will be the glory of his *enthronement*. Oh, how will the Christian stop at the foot of his Master's throne and look upward, and if there could be tears in heaven, tears of rich delight will roll down his cheeks when he looks and sees the man enthroned. "Oh," saith he "I often used to sing on earth, 'Crown him! crown him! crown him King of Kings, and Lord of Lords!'" And now I see him; up those hills of glorious light, my soul doth not dare to climb. There, there he sits! Dark with unsufferable light his skirts appear. Millions of angels bow themselves around him. The redeemed before his throne prostrate themselves with rapture. Ah! we shall not deliberate many moments, but taking our crowns in our hands we shall help to swell that solemn pomp, and casting our crowns at his feet, we shall join the everlasting song, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever." Can you imagine the magnificence of the Saviour? Can you conceive how thrones and princes, principalities and powers, all wait at his beck and command? Ye cannot tell how well the tiara of the universe doth fit his brow, or how the regal purple of all worlds doth gird his shoulders; but certain it is, from the highest heaven to the deepest hell, he is Lord of Lords—from the furthest east to the remotest west, he is master of all. The songs of all creatures find a focus in him. He is the grand reservoir of praise. All the rivers run into the sea, and all

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the hallelujahs come to him, for he is Lord of all. Oh, this is heaven—it is all the heaven I wish, to see my Master exalted; for, this has often braced my loins when I have been weary, and often steeled my courage when I have been faint. “The Lord also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, both of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth.”

And then the believer will have to wait a little while, and then he shall see more glorious things yet. After a few years, he will see the glories of the latter day. We are told in prophecy, that this world is to become the dominion of Christ. At present, idolatry, and bloodshed, and cruelty, and lust, do reign. But the hour is coming, when this Augean stable shall be cleansed once and for ever; when these huge shambles of Acedama shall yet become the temple of the living God. We believe that in these times, Christ with solemn pomp will descend from heaven to reign upon this earth. We cannot read our Bibles and believe them literally, without believing that there are bright days coming, when Christ shall sit upon the throne of his father David, when he shall hold his court on earth, and reign amongst his ancestors gloriously. But oh, if it be so, you and I shall see it, if we belong to the happy number, who have put their trust in Christ. These eyes shall see that pompous appearance, when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. “Mine eyes shall see him, and not another’s.” I could almost weep to think, that I have lost the opportunity of seeing Christ on earth as crucified. I do think the twelve apostles were very highly favoured; but when we shall see our Saviour here, and shall be like our head, we shall think that all deficiencies are made up in the eternal weight of glory. When from the centre to the poles the harmony of this world shall all be given to his praise, these ears shall hear it; and when all nations shall join the shout, this tongue shall join the shout also. Happy men and happy women who have such a hope, so to behold the Saviour’s glory.

And then, after that a little pause. A thousand years shall run their golden cycle, and then shall come the judgment. Christ, with sound of trumpet, in pomp terrific, shall descend from heaven—Angels shall form his body-guard, surrounding him on either hand. The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. The whole sky shall be clad with wonders. Prodiges, and miracles shall be, as rife and as plentiful as the leaves upon the trees. The earth shall totter at the tramp of the Omnipotent; the pillars of the heavens shall stagger like drunken men, beneath the weight of the eternal splendour—heaven shall display itself in the sky, while on earth all men shall be assembled. The sea shall give up its dead; the graves shall yield their tenants; from the cemetery, and the graveyard, and the battle-field, men shall start in their thousands; and every eye shall see him, and they who have crucified him. And while the unbelieving world shall weep and wail because of him, seeking to hide themselves from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne; believers shall come forward, and, with songs and choral symphonies, shall meet their Lord. Then shall they be caught up together with the Lord in the air, and after he hath said, “Come, ye blessed,” they shall sit upon his throne, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; they shall take their seats as assessors upon that awful judgment bench; and when at the last he shall say, “Depart, ye cursed,” and his left hand shall open the door of thunder, and let loose the flames of fire, they shall cry, Amen; and when the earth shall vanish, and men shall sink into their appointed doom, they, gladly seeing the triumph of their Master, shall shout again, again, again the shout of victory—“Hallelujah, for the Lord God hath triumphed over all.”

And to complete the scene, when the Saviour shall ascend on high for the last time, his victories all completed, and death himself being slain, he, like a mighty conqueror about to ride through heaven’s bright streets, shall drag at his chariot wheel hell and death. You and I, attendants at his side, shall shout the victor to his throne; and while the angels clap their bright wings and cry, “the Mediator’s work is done,” you and I

“Louder, than them all shall sing,
While heaven’s resounding mansions ring,
With shouts of sov’reign grace.”

We shall behold his glory. Picture whatever splendour and magnificence you please, if you do but conceive it rightly, you shall behold it.

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You see people in this world running through the streets to see a king or a queen ride through them. How they do climb to their house-tops to see some warrior return from battle. Ah! what a trifle! What is it to see a piece of flesh and blood though it be crowned with gold. But oh! what is it to see the Son of God with heaven's highest honours to attend him, entering within the pearly gates, while the vast universe resounds with "Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

3. I must close by noticing the last point, which is this. In our Saviour's prayer *Heaven's greatest privilege* is also included. Mark, we are not only to be with Christ and to behold his glory, but we are to be like Christ and to be glorified with him. Is he bright? So shall you be. Is he enthroned? So shall you be. Does he wear a crown? So shall you. Is he a priest? So shall you be a priest and a king to offer acceptable sacrifices for ever. Mark, that in all Christ has, a believer has a share. This seems to me to be the sum total, and the crowning of it all,—to reign with Christ, to ride in his triumphal chariot, and have a portion of his joy; to be honoured with him, to be accepted in him, to be glorified with him. This is heaven, this is heaven indeed.

And now, how many of you are there here who have any hope that this shall be your lot? Well said Chrysostom, "The pains of hell are not the greatest part of hell; the loss of heaven is the weightiest woe of hell;" to lose the sight of Christ, the company of Christ, to lose the beholding of his glories, this must be the greatest part of the damnation of the lost.

Oh, you that have not this bright hope, how is it that you can live? You are going through a dark world, to a darker eternity. I beseech you stop and pause. Consider for a moment whether it is worth while to lose heaven for this poor earth. What! pawn eternal glories for the pitiful pence of a few moments of the world's enjoyments. No, stop I beseech you; weigh the bargain ere you accept it. What shall it profit you to gain the whole world and lose your soul, and lose such a heaven as this?

But as for you who have a hope, I beseech you hold it fast, live on it, rejoice in it—

"A hope so much divine,
May trials well endure,
May purge your soul from sense and sin,
As Christ the Lord is pure."

Live near your Master now, so shall your evidences be bright; and when you come to cross the flood, you shall see him face to face, and what that is only they can tell who enjoy it every hour.

ETERNAL JUDGMENT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON ADVENT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1855,

IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF CHESTERFIELD.

BY THE REV. G. BUTT, A.M., VICAR.

“Eternal judgment.”—Hebrews vi. 2.

HERE we have in two words, a doctrine of the most solemn import set forth—one which forms a very essential portion of the Christian faith—and which must of necessity exercise great influence over the mind, and heart, and life of the man who truly believes it.

Eternal judgment—the doctrine of it, says the apostle, is one of the principles of the general doctrine of Christ; i.e., it is one of the first principles or fundamental truths of Christianity.

It is one then of which no man can be safely ignorant; one which no man can doubt or dispute, without great hazard to his soul, and without justly incurring the charge of *unbelief*. We are not at liberty to choose what we shall believe and what we shall *not* believe, of the fundamental truths of Divine Revelation; we must receive all or none, he who rejects any of these truths and articles of the Christian faith, is an heretic, an unbeliever, and hath no part or lot in Christ. The essential doctrines of God's word are so wedded together, that they cannot be taken and accepted separately; if they deny *one*, a virtual denial of *all* is involved in that denial of one. As Christians then, we must believe in the truth of the doctrine of eternal judgment, and must confess that it is one which ought to be constantly realized in the mind, and made a theme of frequent meditation. At this season of the year, in which our church invites us to remember and prepare for the Advent of her Great and Glorified Head, we shall do well to consider what he comes *for*, even, as we believe to be our Judge. “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” (John v. 22.) Jesus Christ is not only the Saviour of men, but the Judge of men; in these titles and offices of Christ we find a twofold reason for honouring and obeying him; he is able to save and deliver us from the wrath to come, he is able to cast us into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, and the one or other he will in-

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fallibly do for every soul of man here present. As it is written—"He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Behold, he cometh with clouds, and the holy angels with him; Divine glory shines about his throne; and he is invested with authority from the Almighty Father to administer "*eternal judgment*." The graves open at the sound of the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead, small and great are gathered together by the angels, and lo! they stand before the awful tribunal and Majesty of the Son of Man to receive *eternal judgment*. This judgment immediately follows upon the general resurrection, accordingly in the verse from which our text is taken, "these doctrines are coupled together—"And of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." There will some indeed be judged who shall not be partakers in the resurrection, because they shall be alive on earth at that time. Christ declares that all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, when they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matthew xxiv. 30.) Doubtless, great consternation will fill the souls of all the ungodly when that stupendous event takes place, perhaps some vain scorner may be in the very act of pronouncing the words—"Where is the promise of his coming?" when Christ shall be suddenly revealed—to employ his own language—"Even as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west." (Matthew xxiv. 27.) Doubtless multitudes will be found in a very bad state of preparation, eating and drinking and minding earthly things, with very little apprehension of the mighty events which are at hand; saying, peace, peace to themselves, till sudden destruction falls upon them. Doubtless, if Christ should come now, this year, this day, this hour, *this very moment*, and what there is to hinder his doing so, I cannot tell, nor you either I suppose, he would not find many hearts amongst us, in which his throne and kingdom were already established—hearts full of faith, and holy fear, and love—hearts that could bid him welcome and hold their confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. Let each one here present consider how it would be with himself or herself. For "we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, there to receive according to the things done in the body, whether they be good or evil, and they that have done good shall rise to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation; and every one of us shall give account for himself unto God."

Having said thus much generally upon the words of our text, I shall now proceed to dwell chiefly upon the word eternal, as it stands connected with the word judgment. Much may be said concerning the doctrine of judgment, and on points which bear relation to it; and all and every of these are important, very important, but it is quite impracticable to enlarge upon all these points in the course of a single sermon, or even to touch upon them, except in the most cursory manner; I shall, therefore, confine my remarks upon the present occasion to the consideration of the word *eternal*, concerning which adjunct it may be said with propriety, that it gives judgment its most weighty and solemn character, and consequence. Human judgment is not without its awe and solemnity, and the arraigned criminal trembles in his guilty soul,

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while standing before the bar of an earthly judge, he awaits with apprehension the sentence which shall inflict upon him the pains and penalties of the law which he has transgressed.

Neither are the circumstances which in human courts of justice accompany the administration of the law without their terrors. It is wisely ordered that the law should be invested with a kind of awful pomp and majesty, to the end that it may command the greater reverence, and extort the more scrupulous obedience. Therefore even the man who is inwardly conscious of his own innocence, and tolerably certain of an acquittal, can scarcely repress feelings of fear, and awe, and mental perturbation, while he stands before the bar of justice to answer an accusation of some serious offence made against him. Still whatever importance may attach to the decision of an earthly court of judicature, how great soever the joy with which *one* hearkens eagerly to the verdict of acquittal, and public declaration of his innocence, by which he is restored to liberty and life; or how poignant soever the anguish with which the wretched offender listens to the sentence of condemnation to the severe penalties of the broken law; nevertheless, there is one circumstance attending these decisions and inflictions, pains and penalties; they are for *time*, and not for *eternity*. Though a malefactor may be sentenced to transportation beyond the seas for the term of his natural life, his sentence cannot extend beyond the term defined, his natural, his bodily life. Or though another for some atrocious crime be sentenced to execution, and to be hanged by the neck until death ensue, it is after all but death of the body, that a human hand can inflict, not that *second* death which is *for ever*.

When the apostle, then, is speaking of *eternal* judgment, it is evident that he is speaking of divine, not merely human judgment. It is the judgment of the Most High God he is treating of, which has an infinitely wider and more extended reach, and when his heavy wrath falls upon the impenitent transgressor, it falls upon him with the consuming fury of the fire that shall *never*, *never* be quenched. Hence, our Saviour, Christ takes occasion to give us this salutary admonition. "I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." (Luke xii. 4, 5.)

It is on this account that St. Paul styles judgment *eternal*—the judgment of the great day—not because the judgment will sit for ever, we know that it will not, for Scripture says, "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world." We need not understand by the word day a span of twenty-four hours; but the word necessarily implies a certain definite period of time, during which the judicial proceedings will be carried on to an end.

The word *eternal*, as coupled with judgment, signifies the everlasting results of the great day of universal judgment, declares that an irrevocable unalterable sentence will then be passed upon every child of Adam, which will eternally decide and fix his condition in happiness or woe. Against this sentence there can be no appeal; you cannot move for a trial in a higher court; no court can be higher than that which the Supreme Majesty of the Creator

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and Lawgiver of heaven and earth, the true and only Potentate, holds by the person of his own co-equal Son, his delegate, duly commissioned and authorized by him for that purpose. There is no chance of a sentence once passed being reversed; the saints receive from their Redeemer a kingdom which shall never be moved, and a crown of glory which fadeth not away, while unto the wicked, the imperishable record of their penal doom stands stereotyped for ever in letters of unquenchable fire. This doctrine of eternal judgment is so expressly and repeatedly stated in holy Scripture, that no man who denies it, or doubts it, can have any reasonable excuse for so doing: nevertheless, it is to be feared that a secret denial or doubt of the truth of everlasting punishment is cherished in the hearts of many who do not go so far as *openly* to express what they fondly imagine, who, perhaps, are scarcely aware of the woeful extent to which unbelief in this respect has laid hold of them.

It is the policy of Satan to cover over as well as to fester mistrust and doubt of God's eternal truth, and to persuade men that they are sound in the faith, while, may be, they are very far gone indeed in the ways of error and apostacy. O! he is a very subtle adversary, and in the natural deceitfulness of our corrupt hearts and blind understandings finds very apt materials to work his wicked will upon. Let us not be ignorant of his devices. In order that we may *know* whether we do really believe all the doctrines of Christ, we should carefully try and examine ourselves to see what influence the truth we suppose we believe exerts over us, how much, and how far it actuates us. Did all professing Christians act thus from time to time, not a few among them would discover that there was little real credit attached in their minds to many of the most essential and vital truths of the Christian revelation. Many would find that the Word of God which they had in some sense received, and fancied they had still in possession, had been long since while they slept stolen by Satan from their hearts.

The phrase "practical infidelity," is not an uncommon one, (by which we understand a denial in the life and conversation of truths received with the mind) yet, I very much doubt whether practical infidelity ever exists but in company with, and in consequence of, *heart infidelity*. Indeed, these two kinds of infidelity act mutually upon one another. Without faith of the mind and heart, and reception of the truth in the love of it, the conduct can never be truly righteous and godly; while on the other hand, unless the truth which is held *speculatively* is confessed *practically* and acted upon, as the truth according to godliness, it is likely to *depart* ere long from the mind of the man who was once illuminated, and its place will be occupied by some specious and fatal error. Such transmutation of God's truth into a lie is being continually effected by Satan, who, to accomplish his purpose the better can assume the form of an angel of light. Accordingly Paul warns Timothy, a young disciple, "hold faith and a good conscience, which (i.e. a good conscience,) some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." (1 Timothy i. 19.) You see how important it is to keep a good conscience, and to practice the truth we believe. Be sure of this, that where the heart is *libertine*, the creed will be *latitudinarian*. They who live in the practice and love of sin, are fair

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to escape from the irksome trammels of Christ's yoke and service, and willing are such to keep their consciences tranquil while they indulge their sinful lusts, and run riot in ungodly ways, by inventing false glosses for *alarming* texts of Scripture, or adopting those which have been conceived by clearer fools than themselves, and thus they manage to hoodwink the eyes of faith; and when they have by dint of some wretched sophistry contrived, as they flatter themselves, to wrest the thunderbolts of Jehovah's wrath from his holy and Almighty hand, and to extinguish those intolerable flames of the fiery abyss which he hath kindled for his enemies, then they sit down with self-complacency and composure to enjoy a full table of sensual delights and carnal diversions. To what shall we liken this folly? To what but that of the bird of the desert, who being hard pressed by the hunters, hides her head in some small bush, which is at hand, and fancies her large bulk to be placed in safe concealment, because she can no longer see with her eyes the danger which threatens. So with the miserable dupes of a miserable delusion, while they are wilfully oblivious of the impending danger, it will be found that though they dream of safety, nevertheless, to employ the language of St. Peter, "their judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." (2 Peter ii. 3.) Oh! if there is any one here present who has been comforting his poor soul in the lap of sinful pleasure, by the thought that the wrath of God revealed from heaven against such ways and doings as worldly men follow, will not burn to the lowermost hell, or will not burn *for ever*, to such an one I would say, what more direct assertions of the *everlastingness* of divine wrath can you reasonably require, than those you find in the Scriptures, the Oracles of God. If you read the Bible, but I fear you do not, you would find this very solemn truth set forth in the way of express and reiterated affirmation; and, moreover, implied and involved in numerous other passages of holy writ. What, I ask you, did Isaiah mean when he spoke of the devouring fire and everlasting burnings in which sinners and hypocrites might well fear to dwell? and of wrath upon transgressors, for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched—(Isaiah xxxiii. 14, and lxvi. 24)—which Christ repeats after him, and that three times. Will any quibble about the meaning of the term *everlasting*, and insinuate that it does not necessarily mean infinite duration; to such, I would say, how futile is your subterfuge, when there are passages in the Bible in which the same doctrine is expressed in other terms, as in the passage already cited, "Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." By the general consent of the church of Christ through all generations, the word in the Greek, which is translated eternal and everlasting, has been held to express *infinite duration*; and it is not consistent with the wisdom and mercy of God to suffer his people to continue all along in error upon so important a point. St. Paul declares that there remaineth *no more* sacrifice for sin to afford hope and salvation to those who have rejected Christ. Our Lord declares, that the rich man in hell had not one drop of water allowed him to cool his parched tongue, which evidently signifies that there is not the least hope or comfort for those who are cast into prison as debtors to Divine justice. The second death is a death of

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infinite duration; it is not the extinction of existence, but it is the infliction of all that is *evil* upon sinners; it is the deprivation of all that is *good*. In the place of punishment, light is shut out for ever; heaven, and Christ, and happiness, are for ever *lost*. Such is the consequence of *not* believing the gospel, and not accepting the salvation of Christ; the wrath of God abiding upon all who act thus madly for *ever*. The preaching of the gospel is a judgment preparatory to eternal judgment. So says our Lord, "this is the condemnation (it should be the judgment), that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." All who do so, declare themselves enemies of God, and are already judged and condemned by a sentence which will be confirmed and executed at the great day by him, who of old spoke these memorable words.

"Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men," said an apostle.

O, now let me earnestly press upon you the consideration of eternal judgment, and the wisdom of preparing for it. Repent and obey the gospel, lay hold of Christ, that through his word and blood, his righteousness and Holy Spirit you may, being delivered from the wrath to come, be a people prepared for the Lord at his second Advent. (Luke i. 17.) Remember the warning conveyed by him through the parable of the servant, who, when he knew his lord's will, prepared not himself, and was therefore, and justly, beaten with many stripes. (Luke xii. 47.) Oh, then, "prepare to meet thy God." Cultivate that lively faith, whereby you may habitually look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, remembering that the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. It is the *eternity*, the infinite duration of the things which the gospel reveals, which makes it the everlasting gospel. It speaks to you of an Eternal God and an Everlasting Saviour, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It lays before you everlasting life, and eternal death. It promises you, as believers in Jesus, everlasting righteousness, wrought out and brought in by his obedience unto death; of a hope full of life and immortality, it speaks invitingly; it offers you everlasting consolation through grace; it promises an Eternal Spirit for a Comforter, and a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory to be revealed. It engages for your support everlasting arms to bear you through the deep waters of death, and an incorruptible crown, and abiding mansion in those heavens, in which the righteous shall shine as the sun, and the stars for ever and ever. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." "The wicked passeth as the whirlwind," says the wise man, "but the righteous is an everlasting foundation." (Proverbs x. 25.) Almighty God impresses the seal of his own *everlastingness* upon the celestial felicities of his saints—and not one jewel shall ever drop from the diadem of their unspeakable glory. What blessedness is theirs—so exalted, so fixed, so perfect, so enduring. Behold the righteous, the accepted of the Lord, who standing at the right hand of their Judge, have heard the acceptable words "Come ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"—now retiring from the court of eternal judgment with

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songs of joy and gladness; for them the gates of heaven lift up their everlasting doors, and angel voices welcome, as they enter in. Henceforth and for ever they are freed from every cause of pain and sorrow—sin, death, and the curse are for them eternally abolished; they shall weep no more, for God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; the former things are passed away, and a new era begins of uninterrupted bliss and ineffable glory. They have now attained to the mark for the prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus. And little do they reckon of the tribulations they were once called to endure; the transient labour pangs of this new and heavenly birth. Here they shall be “for ever with the Lord,” for ever and ever, drinking in life and joy without stint and without interruption; basking for ever in the unclouded sunshine of the Divine countenance; having blessed experience of the fruition of the Triune Jehovah. Eternity rolls onward its countless ages, but when millions of millions of those ages have lapsed, still their overflowing cup of heavenly delights is not diminished by one drop; their fulness of joy is *not less* full, and the rivers of pleasures which are at God’s right hand are still flowing on in the same abundant stream of blessing. On the other hand, let us view the awful weight which eternity attaches to the condemnation of the wicked; the very mention of which is enough to make both the ears to tingle of those who do *not* love God, and to fill them with overwhelming terrors, and make them quake exceedingly. “There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,” says the mild and gracious Jesus, who “came into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” *There.* Do you ask *where*? There, where the enemies of God lie under the intolerable burden of his fierce and fiery indignation for ever, shut out from the glory of his presence, and from the heavenly city, in “the blackness of darkness for ever.” (Jude 13.) Sinner, who now *hardenest* thyself against the fear of the Lord and the mercy of Christ, think wilt thou then be able to hold it out bravely when the lash of his vengeance smites thee, and the pit of hell is opened for thee? What saith God by his prophet—(Ezekiel xxii. 14.) “Can thine heart *endure*, or can thy hands be *strong* in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it.” Ye who sin against an infinite God. anticipate *infinite* wrath at his hands, unless you repent, unless you accept the infinite atonement of Christ; unless you fly for refuge to the hope set before you. If you will not repent of your sins *now*, he will not repent of your sufferings *hereafter*. Now is the acceptable time, and day of salvation; now is the hour of God’s long suffering, but the season will come for your long suffering; thou shalt suffer long for thy abusing the long suffering of God. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” O, consider this ye that forget God, and provoke him who is a consuming fire. Arrogant sinners now *disdain* to tremble at the Word of God. Satan tempts us to *despise* that which himself *cannot* despise; even “devils believe and tremble.” Witness their horror, when the Holy Jesus, whom they recognised as their appointed Judge, drew near and spoke to them. They cried by the mouth of the possessed man, “I beseech thee, torment me not; I adjure thee, by God, torment me not.” *Well*, they know what eternal fire

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is prepared for them and their servants. Beware lest devils rise up against thee in the judgment, unbelieving sinner, and condemn thee.

O, that men would be wise, and consider what a terrible thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, i.e. the everlasting God, "For the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the *second* death." (Rev. xxi. 8.) Yet there are some of you who make light of the gospel and walk in your own ways, and promise yourselves peace. What have you made an agreement with hell? Have you made a covenant with death? Have you put far from you the evil day? You may fancy so, you may congratulate yourselves to such effect; nevertheless, you will at last find it quite *otherwise*. These are everlasting realities, which are momentarily approaching. Every tick of the clock diminishes the distance between you and them. The hour is at hand, in which the hail will sweep away your refuge of lies, and where will you be then? Be advised of this, as truth is truth, and God is God, so surely he that cometh will come, and will not tarry; the Lord Christ will be revealed in great power and glory, and every eye shall see him, he shall execute universal and eternal judgment, "who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." (Romans ii. 6—9.) Turn thou us, then, good Lord, and so shall we be turned. Spare thy people whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood; and from all contempt of thy word and commandments, and from thy wrath, and everlasting damnation, good Lord deliver us. And let the humble believer rejoice. Blessed be God "there is *no* condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE CRY OF THE HEATHEN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 25TH, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us."—Acts xvi. 9.

THIS was no doubt a special vision sent of God for the direction of the apostle. For we are told in the next verse, that they assuredly gathered from this vision, that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel in Macedonia. And yet the vision may be very readily accounted for by natural causes. Men usually dream of that which is most upon their minds. Who would marvel that the miser should, in his restless sleep, be pictured to his own sight as counting over his gold? Who wonders that the mother's dream is often concerning her fair infant? Who marvels that the wife frequently dreams of shipwrecks, when, in the stormy night, she lies upon her bed, her last thoughts having been exercised concerning her husband at sea? You wonder not that the soldier in the trenches dreams of battle. And hence we cannot marvel that the apostle Paul, whose whole soul was full of his Master's cause, should have a vision in the night concerning a new field of labour, which God had intended to open up to him. You will remember that the apostle was, on this occasion, in a peculiar condition. He at first endeavoured to preach the gospel in Phrygia and Galatia, but he was forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia. And "after they had come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not." The apostle was like Abraham of old; he went forth, not knowing whither he went. There was a certain path which he must take, and when he strove to turn either to the right hand or to the left, the Spirit directly forbade him, and he was compelled to go on till he came to the sea-port of Troas. There, wearied with his journey, he cast himself upon his couch, and in the midst of the night a vision appeared unto him. A man who by his brogue and his dress was discovered to be a Macedonian, said to him, "Come over and help us." God sometimes tells men in their sleep the secret they could not discover when they were awake. We have heard of the preacher who, tired late on Saturday evening, has been unable to think of a discourse, in the middle of the night has dreamed it through, and on the morrow has ascended his pulpit and preached it. What wonder then, that the apostle Paul, specially directed by the Spirit of God, after all day long wearily exercising his mind as to the journey God intended him to take, should, after all, when in his sleep, have a vision from on high, teaching him where he should go.

And now, beloved, having thus prefaced our discourse, we have another observation to make before we proceed to a full discussion of the text. What an instance of Divine sovereignty we have in our text! He who is wise can see sovereignty everywhere in the work of salvation, but how clearly is it present here. Bithynia must not hear the gospel; the apostle desires to go and preach it there; but as yet, it seems, God does not intend that Bithynia should be evangelised. He desires to tarry in Asia, and there throughout its length and breadth preach the gospel; but he is strictly forbidden, and the command comes to him that he is to go across to Europe, and there proclaim the gospel. Was not this sovereignty? Why was it that God shut the door in Bithynia, and opened it in Philippi? Was it that Philippi was more worthy, or that Bithynia needed it less? Assuredly not. It was of God's mercy that he sent the gospel at any time, and when he sent to Philippi the most eminent of apostles to preach it, who shall blame him? Has he not a right to do what he wills with his own? But we may rest quite assured, that his sovereignty was not an arbitrary exercise of despotic will. It was a sovereignty dictated by the highest wisdom; for while God rules all things according to his own will, yet we are expressly told, that he doeth it according to the counsels of his will, his will being no blind headstrong thing, willing for no reason whatever, but being always subject to his own sense of that which is the wisest, and which will promote his glory and his creature's profit. However, we must still observe, Divine sovereignty is that which casts a rich lustre upon grace, when we recollect that it is sovereign and free. Oh ye, of the race of Britain! bless the Lord, that he hath sent the gospel unto you; for while doubtless there is wisdom in it, remember there is also sovereignty in it. "He hath not dealt so with any nation. Praise ye the Lord." Had he willed it, had he seen fit, the gospel had this day been flourishing in the centre of Africa, and you might at this moment have been destitute of the word of the gospel, living barbarians like your fathers, embruing your hands in blood. Unto the great, dread Sovereign, who ruleth as he wills on earth as in heaven, be glory for ever and ever.

And now we turn to our text. "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." First, we shall observe, that *the best help that can be rendered to any people is the preaching of the gospel*. "Come over and help us," that is, preach to us. Secondly, we shall notice that *although we have no visions or dreams in the night, yet, the nations of the earth are calling to the church of the living God, and are saying to us, "Come over to us, and help us."* And then, thirdly, I shall conclude, by solemnly asking the question, *what do you who love the Lord intend to say to those, who are now asking at your hands the help of a preached gospel?*

I. First, then, THE GREATEST HELP THAT CAN BE GIVEN TO ANY PEOPLE, IS THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL, and when I say this, I am uttering a truth which I need not guard. The gospel is a help, not in one way, but in every way. Those who have not the gospel stand in the greatest need of help; but when the gospel is carried, you carry everything within it. In the folds of the gospel sleepeth the manifold wisdom of God, and his manifold goodness also toward the sons of men. Behold, the nations of the earth this day are still the bond-slaves of tyrants—many lands are still subject to despotic dynasties, who trample men beneath their feet, as if men were but earthen pitchers to be broken in pieces by the iron rods of kings. How is liberty to be established in these lands? Shall the point of the bayonet bring liberty to these nations that still are slaves? Never, never. Iron makes our fetters, iron rivets them, but iron never can unloose them. We need something more potent than steel to carve out the liberty of mankind.

Love, the love of the Gospel, must be the ground work of liberty, and if *liberty*, *equality*, and *fraternity*, the three great words that are the world's heir loom, are ever to be fully known and realised, it must be by the preaching of the Word of Jesus. The preaching of the gospel is the terror of despots. If you ask what makes this land free, every candid man must say it is the open gospel and the unfettered preaching of the Word. Glasgow's motto is, "Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word." It is the coat of arms of liberty herself. Liberty flourishes by the preaching of the Word of God. Certain it is that wherever you find Protestantism, you find liberty, and wherever you leave Protestantism behind you, you begin to feel the yoke, and to hear the groans of the oppressed. It is true that Protestantism doth not in every place produce perfect liberty, because it is not sufficiently true to itself. There are still places where the slave feels the lash, while his master calls himself a Christian; but this is not the legitimate effect of our religion, but rather the effect of a delusion which hell itself did first invent, and which nought but the deep depravity of men could ever permit to stand before the face of God's sun. Yea, ye tyrants on your thrones, the little stone cut out of the mountain without hands shall yet break you in pieces! O great statue of tyranny with thy head of gold, and thy feet of clay, thou shalt yet totter, for this shall break thee in pieces, for the breaker is come out before us, and the king at the head of us, and who can withhold his might? What shall hold out against the mighty principle wherewith Christ makes men free?

Look, brethren, too, and see how the nations of the earth are lying under gloomy superstition. Perhaps there is one thing in the world worse than kingcraft, and that is priestcraft. May God save us from two things—from tyrannical kings, and from priests of all sorts. Priests of any sort are bad, but superstitious priests are the worst of all. Oh, how many nations of the earth have their intellect blighted, their hopes blasted, their progress stopped, their whole history eclipsed of its glory, their state robbed of its riches, by the cursed dominancy of priests. Men are compelled to believe just what the priest chooses. Because he wears a cassock; because he has been educated in the deep mysteries of craftiness, he is to be lord over men's consciences, and consciences and hearts are to bow before him; wherever he comes his word is to be law, his will is to open and shut the gates of heaven, for he pretends that the keys of heaven and of hades are hanging at his girdle. How shall we deliver men from these enthralling superstitious! No how, but by the preaching of the gospel. You cannot make men free, even by governments; you cannot give them a thorough freedom by giving them a republic itself; for that republic must fall so long as priestcraft is there, for liberty and priestcraft agree as well together as God and devil, and no better; and until the one falls the other can never stand.

But the preaching of the gospel which teaches that believers are all priests and kings; which lifts every one of us into the high places of princes and monarchs, and puts every one of us on a level with pontiffs and priests—this is the gospel which shall yet set men free, and the preaching of this, and this only, is the world's great and grandest hope of its deliverance from the slavery of the body and the yet more accursed bondage of the soul.

But, beloved, there are some nations of the earth that have never as yet tasted of the sweets of salvation. Large tracts of country have been discovered, where the people are still debased and degraded; the kral of the Hottentot has not yet blossomed into a mansion, the spear of the New Zealander has not yet been entirely changed for a pruning hook. There are many places where all the joys of life and the social comforts and enjoyments of our being, are as yet totally unknown. Now, the gospel has blessings in both its hands. Wherever it goes it has the bles-

sings of heaven, rich and golden—it has the blessing of the earth, fair and silvery. They are both precious things, and while we believe the gospel is ordained most of all to bless man for the hereafter, yet the secularist himself, if he were wise, must take some interest in the progress of the gospel, for it is a blessing to men even in this life. The great civilizer is the cross. Nothing else can make the barbarian into a civilized man, but the cross and the vision of Christ hanging on it. Blessed are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of peace, for where they bring the glad tidings of peace with God, they bring also good news of goodwill towards men,—even goodwill towards men as creatures here, as well as good news to them as creatures that are to exist for ever. My dear brethren and sisters, if you would bless the world, in the largest possible sense, temporarily, spiritually, and eternally; if you would bless the bodies and the souls of men; if you would bless men in their children, in their houses; if you would bless them in their meats and drinks, and in all the necessities of life, the one simple means of doing all this, is just the proclamation of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that fully preached and received, has been proved in instances which I need not now stop to recall to your memories—instances abundant and recent, to be after all, the power of God, not only to salvation but to civilization too.

There is yet one more point which I must mention here in which the gospel is the best help to man. We must remember to-day, that there are districts of the earth where the ground is yet red with blood. There are sad portions of our globe that as yet must have the name of Aceldama, the field of gore; there are spots where the horse-hoof is splashed with blood; where the very carcasses of men are the food of ravens and of jackalls; the mounds of Balaclava are as yet scarcely green, and the spots where rest the relics of our own murdered sisters and brothers are not covered with the memorial stone. War has ravaged whole districts; even in these late times the dogs of war are not yet muzzled. Oh! what shall we do to put an end to war? Mar, where is the chain that shall bind thee, like Prometheus, to the rock? How shall we imprison thee for ever, thou cruel Moloch; how shall we for ever chain thee? Behold here is the great chain, that which one day is to bind the great serpent; it has the blood-red links of love. The gospel of Jesus Christ the crucified one, shall yet hush the clarion of war, and break the battle-bow in sunder.

Happy are we, thrice happy, that we have a gospel which shall make men

“Hang the useless helmet high.
And study war no more.”

Let us spread it, then, to earth's utmost bounds; for, to repeat the text I quoted just now, it hath blessings in both its hands, wherever it goes, temporarily as well as eternally, it blesses the human race. And when it shall have spread to its utmost limits, when all the habitable earth shall be covered with it, then the mist that swathes our planet shall be rolled away, and bright, like a new-born morning star, this earth shall shine out with her sister stars in all her glory, and the angels shall once more sing, and God himself shall repeat his verdict:—“all things are very good.”

But still, beloved, the greatest help that the gospel brings is help to the soul. Ah, Christian men, ye know what this means: your brothers and sisters are this day wandering blindfold, they know not whither. Ye know, for the Bible tells you, that they are wending their weary way down to the gulf of black despair! Oh, does not your heart desire that the blind eye should be opened, that the misguided should be directed on the path to heaven: would not your pity desire to snatch the fire brand from the flame? Do you not anxiously seek to know how you can lead the vicious to virtue, and the virtuous to the righteousness that is in Jesus Christ? Have you no desire to see God's elect gathered, to see them washed, and sanctified, and perfected? Remember this is to be, and since it is to be, it is certain that ye must send the gospel far and wide, for by no other means can God's elect be gathered home. How can they believe without a preacher? How can they preach except they be sent? The gospel must go throughout all lands, that the elect may be gathered home, and the Messiah's kingdom come. Oh! ye who love the souls of men, it is to you an awful thought that hell's caverns are filling; it is a dreary thing to you to see the broad road so crowded with its many travellers? You are longing and wishing that the narrow way

might have more pilgrims; I beseech you, then, look to it, that by every means and by all means ye aid the preaching of the gospel of Jesus; for it is the help for which the earth calls, and the help which you must render to it. Come over and help us by preaching Christ's holy gospel. Thus have I done with the first head, may the Lord help us in the second.

II. The second point is, that although not in visions of the night, yet EVERY DAY AND EVERY HOUR, THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH ARE SAYING, "COME OVER AND HELP US." Do you not know, that the loudest eloquence is silence? To move the heart of the right-minded, ye need not the declamation of the orator. The sight of silent, dumb misery, is the highest eloquence to a tender heart. It is true, I must confess it, the nations of the earth do not vocally ask for your help; nay, worse than that, if you send them the help of the gospel, they will many of them reject it. Your missionaries have been slain,—the altars of false gods have been stained with their blood; but still I solemnly repeat it, the nations of the earth are silently crying, "Come over and help us." If I saw a person in the street sick, faint, and dying, although he spoke not to me, though he asked me not to befriend him, I should think the weakness of his silence more potent than all the power of words. Ay, and if I saw him like a maniac, rejecting my help and pushing me from him, if I was convinced that he was really a maniac, for that very reason that he needed my help, I would thrust my alms upon him, I would willingly give him my help and assistance; and so must you do. The nations of the earth are dead in sin; how can they cry to you? But it is yours to see their misery; and let the poor, poor dumb wounds of this bleeding earth speak to you. It is true, earth is a maniac, and it puts away the only cure. But what care we for that? It is ours to thrust our kindness upon unwilling men, because we believe that their unwillingness arises from the madness of their disease. Let us take the poor man that has fallen among thieves. Let us pour in the oil and the wine, and if he doth not receive it gratefully, because he is faint, if he putteth his hand upon the wound, and rends away the liniment, and unbinds the plaster, nevertheless, let us bind him up again, and set him upon our own beast, and carry him to the inn. Let us pay for the lodging, even though as yet he cannot speak to thank us; and the day shall come, when the wound is healed, and the burning fever is removed; when his brain is cool, and his reason restored, that he shall fall at our feet and kiss the hand that once he spurned. Unborn generations shall bless the men that sent the gospel, which at first their fathers did reject.

And now, brethren and sisters, let me plead the cause of the dumb. No man of Macedonia is here to-day to say, "Come over and help us;" but let me be the heathen's spokesman, and very earnestly ask you to come and help him. Methinks, I will stand here as a heathen this morning, and I say to you, as if I had not heard the gospel, "Ye Christians of Britain! ye highly favoured ones, who know the name of Jesus and prove the power of the Spirit, preach the gospel to us, for we are men like yourselves. What though our skin be of a colour less fair than your own? Yet he fashioneth our hearts alike. Oh tell us not, because we feed on the locust, and eat the serpent, that therefore we are not of your kith and kind! 'Not that which goeth into a man defileth a man.' It is true, our kings and princes are only fit to rank with your beggars; but oh! God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth; and from our huts and cabins we come forth to-day, and we say to you, 'We are men—we are your brothers—younger brothers, it is true—we have not had a double portion of the inheritance; brothers, too, whose fathers spent their part in riotous living; but why should the children's teeth be set on edge because the fathers have eaten sour grapes? Why must the son of Ham for ever bear the curse of Canaan? O preach the gospel to us! We are men; mother Eve is our mother, as well as yours; Adam, too, is the father from whose loins we sprang; and because we are men, the common sympathy of humanity bids you listen to us, when we say, 'Come over and help us.' Besides, we have another argument. We are told that 'unto you is the Word of this salvation sent,' not for yourselves, but for us, brothers, who have not heard the gospel, and who know it not. And you have the treasure in your own land; and we believe you have the treasure given to you, that you may lavish handfuls of it out to us. We know that old Judea had the covenant and the oracles, and the gospel to keep for coming generations; and we believe that you men of Britain have the gospel, not for yourselves, but for us. We have heard that your Master said, 'Ye are the lights of the world;' not lights of Britain, not

lights for yourselves, but the lights of the world. Oh! bear your burning torches into the glades of our dark forests; come and shed your light through the dark mists of our idolatrous temples; let the bats of our superstition, and the owls of our ignorance, fly away before the sunlight of your gospel. It is not for yourselves you have received it, but for us. Oh! give it to us. Preach the gospel to us, for it is designed for us. But we have another argument, brethren; look at our miseries!"

As the spokesman for my poor brethren to-day, I stand before you, and I remind you of the tortures to which the poor Hindoo devotee puts himself. I remind you of the cruelties enacted in the Chinese empire—the horrors of a government that is based upon idolatry. I tell you of the distress, the destitution, the poverty, the nakedness, the misery of the Bechuannas and the Bushmen; and I speak for these, and I say "Christians, you have the means of alleviating their woes by sending them the gospel; will you not do it?" Look at the dwellers in the land of the jungle and the lion. There they are; the serpent has grasped them in his folds, and like the boa-constrictor of their own forests, he is crushing their nations, until the ribs of the strong man snap, and the hearts of the women melt like wax. And you have the sword in your hands that can cut the serpent's head! Your Master bruised that head beneath his heel, and you must do the same. Oh! come, come, ye missionaries of the cross, ye ministers of Jesus, come and deliver us from this deadly hydra! Save us from our fearful doom! Our miseries invoke your aid. It is true, we cannot speak to you in gentle language; but there was a time when poets walked amongst us, and some of the light that shone in Paradise, yet gilded our darkness; and we treasured up a few of those faint rays, and we are hoping that the sun of righteousness will yet dawn upon us. Oh! come, roll away those mists; come, chase our night, and let us see that sacred, high, eternal noon, which is the daughter of the gospel following the Sun of Righteousness.

And now Christian men, let me speak to you as one of yourselves. Brethren, you and I are soldiers, soldiers of the cross, and at this hour worlds are rushing to the shock. The fight is thickening, and we are warriors! Shame upon the craven who stays from the battle. The trumpet is sounding to-day. Mohammed has waked from his sleep; the Moslem, with bloody hands, has sought to slay our race; the Hindoo, too, the meek-eyed Hindoo, his eyes have glared like the eyes of his tiger, and his lips have smacked with gore. The battle is raging. Not there alone. Popery hath aroused itself; with mighty effort it is endeavouring to win back this gem of the sea, this first isle of the ocean. Infidelity, too, is on the stir; her myrmidons are flying here and there. Everything is awake, except the church of God. Oh! rouse ye, men and brethren; rouse, now that the fight is at its fullest fury. Now is the time for our most desperate valour, our most earnest zeal. Recollect, every time you bow your knees, and say, "Our Father," you tell a lie at the end of that prayer, if you are not seeking to make his kingdom come, and his will be done in earth, as it is heaven. You are praying for what you do not try to get; you are insulting God by saying, "Thy kingdom come," with as foul a mockery, as if I should say, "Be warmed and be filled," to some poor dying beggar, and then refused to give to his needs, that he might remove his distresses.

Recollect, too, that you cannot be Christians at all, not in the right sense of the word, unless you everyone of you would compass sea and land to make one proselyte. You must have in you the spirit of propagation, desirous to win others to Christ, or else the genuine blood of Christianity is not in your veins. Of all things in the world Christianity is the most prolific, if it be true. Mohammedanism of old had mighty power to spread itself, but not such power as Christianity had. The religion of Jesus began like a mustard seed, with those few men in an upper-room; but ere a half century had rolled away, the gospel was preached to every nation under heaven; and if we had Christianity in our hearts of the right sort—hot, burning stuff, not the lukewarm shams of this degenerate age, our religion, ere another half a century will have won the day. If the Spirit of God should give us true diligence, in the course of another half century there would not be one district that would not have been trodden by the foot of the minister, nor one town or city which would not have been evangelized. I know I am not speaking without book now; I am absolutely certain that what I am saying is a sober matter of fact. If you will just calculate the proportion between the four hundred, and the progress made in one half a century, and then begin with the three or four millions—I should hope there are as many as that—of true Christians in the

THE CRY OF THE HEATHEN.

world, I say, it is a little thing to believe that if they were true to their profession, they might, under Divine blessing, carry the gospel into every known part of the habitable world before half a century has rolled away. However, we need not be afraid we shall do it. There is no fear that we shall run into any fanaticism. That is the last sin this age will commit. We shall go on, and be as orthodox and cold as we always were. No enthusiasm will ever fall upon us. We shall not see any very great and strange developments of an enormous fanaticism at the present day. Do not be alarmed, brothers and sisters. All I preach that looks like fanaticism will not hurt this age. Ye may do what ye will; preach ye never so wisely, ye will never make this deaf adder hear. The church of this day is a great deal too deaf to do anything extravagant. We do a little, and think it a wonderful deal. We each give fourpence to send Testaments to China; we will talk of it for the next fifty years! We sent out one or two missionaries to India; (and are they not one or two, compared with their needs?) it is a great thing. It is a fine thing for the whole Baptist denomination to raise twenty thousand pounds a year, when there are some men in the denomination who make as much money as that in the time. It is a marvellous thing that out of the whole lot of us we should not be able to get more than that. But you know I am an imprudent young man, of course,—I always shall be I dare say—to dare to hint that some people have a great deal too much money to go to heaven with. Of course it will be very wicked if I dare to say this morning, that to die rich is a very frightful thing; that there are some people who have got too much riches to allow us to have any sure and certain hope that they have the love of God at all; for if they had more of the love of God, they would not grip their money so tightly. They would say, "While men are damning, what is my money? While men are dying, what is my gold? There it goes! As much as I need, I have, God allows it me; as much as I shall require in my old age, as much as my family can demand of me, that will I have, but as for more, a blast and a curse would be on it if I had it. My gold and my silver would be cankered, for I should be guilty of the blood of men's souls, and then condemnation would be at my door, because I had the money wherewithal to send the minister to preach to them, and I would not give it."

Now, I say again, there is no fear of any one becoming improvidently liberal. You need not be frightened that anyone here will give a thousand pounds this morning. We provide ample accommodation for those who feel inclined to do so. If anyone should be overtaken with such an enormous fit of generosity, we will register and remember it. But I fear there are no people like Barnabas now. Barnabas brought all he had, and put it into the treasury. "My dear friend, do not do that; do not be so rash." Ah! he will not do that; there is no necessity for you to advise him. But I do say again, if Christianity were truly in our hearts; if we were what we professed to be; the men of generosity whom we meet with now and hold up as very paragons and patterns would cease to be wonders, for they would be as plentiful as leaves upon the trees. We demand of no man that he should beggar himself; but we do demand of every man who makes a profession that he is a Christian, that he should give his fair proportion, and not be content with giving as much to the cause of God as his own servant. We must have it that the man who is rich must give richly. We know the widow's mite is precious, but the widow's mite has been an enormously great loss to us. O, that widow's mite has lost Jesus Christ many a thousand pounds. It is a very good thing in itself; but people with thousands a-year talk of giving a widow's mite. What a wicked application of what never can apply to them. No; in our proportion we must serve our God.

III. Now, I come in conclusion to ask you very pointedly and plainly, **WHAT YOU MEAN TO DO IN ANSWER TO THE HEATHEN'S CRY, "COME OVER AND HELP US?"** Have I in all this congregation one man who loves sound doctrine, who has ability to preach, and who has a mind to go and preach the gospel in other lands? Because if I have, and if I have ten others who have a mind to give him ten pounds a year, I have an opening for sending him out at once. In Port Natal there are twenty Baptists, and those twenty Baptists are desirous of having a minister who should not only preach to them, but to the wild tribes around. They will raise him one hundred pounds, if we can manage to get the rest and send them out a missionary. Who can tell; he might be another Livingstone, perhaps a Moffat? Oh, that I had the honour of sending such an one from such a congregation as this! Have we no young men here this morning, who

are ready to volunteer to go and preach the gospel in heathen lands? I confess, when I think of myself, I know I cannot go away. My calling is here. And yet I sometimes think what a lazy, feather-bed life it is for one to lead, to be preaching here when there are all these continents without the gospel. Some people think it wonderfully hard to preach two or three sermons a week; but I think preaching thirteen or fourteen is a fearfully little thing. And I think sometimes, "Oh, if I were somewhere else, where there are some toils, some hardships to undergo! There is nothing to be done here. We cannot suffer, we cannot work, we cannot win crowns of martyrdom, we cannot win great battles here, as we could wish." Yes, young man, I say again, if you are ambitious—if you are ambitious to serve Christ, the height of your ambition should lead you to say, "I desire to preach the gospel among the heathen." I hope there may be some here—some one at least—whose heart God hath touched. What! can it be possible that I should this morning address some eight thousand people, and yet out of the whole eight thousand there is not one who can say, "Here am I, send me?" Is it not strange? Very probably there is not. But yet I would fain hope that somewhere there is one, who will write on the tablet of his heart, "I will go home to pray, I will go home to study, and if God has given me power to preach, if there be any door open in his providence, here am I; I will be a preacher of the gospel in foreign lands."

And now, what are you resolved to do who cannot preach? Why, there are some of you, if you were to get up and preach, you had a great deal better sit down. It would not do for you to go and preach in foreign lands, because nobody would listen to you. I have often marvelled that some people should think themselves called to preach when they have no ability. As I tell them, "If God calls anybody to fly, he will give them wings; and if he calls them to preach, he will give them ability to preach;" but if a man has not the ability to preach, I am sure he has not the call. Well, what will you do? Says one, "I will pray earnestly in support of missions; I will cry to God, that great results may follow." Do so; and you shall have our best thanks for your prayers. But in doing that, you have not done very much; for recollect, that is what the Roman priest did for the beggar. The priest said he would not give him a sovereign, he would not give him a half-crown, nor would he give him a penny. "Holy father," said the beggar, "will you give me your prayers?" "Yes," said the priest, "kneel down." "No, not so," said the beggar; "for if your prayers had been worth a penny, you would not have given them to me." And when you say you will pray, but will not help the cause with something more substantial; though we love your prayers, we might say, "You would not give them if they were worth a penny." If you have nought else to give to Christ, ye need not be ashamed of saying, "Jesus, I give thee my prayers;" but if you are blessed in your substance, you will be lying before him, if you ask him to bless his cause, and do not give of your means in its support.

Now, let each, as he is able, help this great cause; and above all, let us all in our spheres be preachers of the gospel,

"Seeking to tell to others round,
What a dear Saviour we have found."

Let me say, before the collection is made, just this word. Alas! there are some of you here, that are as much heathen as if you were in Africa. To you I proclaim the gospel, and I have done—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

[No. 190 will contain the ANNUAL SERMON, preached at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens, on behalf of the BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY, by the Rev. C. H. SPENCER, on Wednesday, April 23, 1858, and will be published on Friday, April 30th.]

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE DESOLATIONS OF THE LORD, THE CONSOLATION OF
HIS SAINTS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, APRIL 28, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS,

On behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society.

"Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire."—Psalm xlv. 8, 9.

It seems that everything Christ-like must have a history like that of Christ. His beginnings were small—the manger and the stable. So with the beginnings of that society which we love, and which we believe to be the very incarnation of the Spirit of Christ. Its beginnings also were small; but its latter end shall doubtless greatly increase,—for, hath not the end of Christ become exceedingly glorious? He hath ascended up on high; he sitteth at the right hand of God, our Father, and doubtless this agency which God now employeth for the conversion of the world, shall have its ascension, and God shall greatly magnify it. But as Christ was called to suffer, so must everything Christ-like suffer with him. The Christian who is the most like his Master will understand the most of the meaning of that term, "fellowship with him in his sufferings;" and inasmuch as the Missionary Society is like Christ, and hath Christ's heart and Christ's aim, it also must suffer like Jesus. This year we have been made to sip of that cup. The blood of our martyrs has been shed; our confessors have witnessed to the faith of the Lord Jesus; at the hands of bloodthirsty and cruel men they have met their fate, and again the seed of the church has been sown in the blood of the martyred saint.

I felt that in addressing you this day it would be far from me to offer you any advice or counsel, when I am but as the youngest among you all, but that I might be permitted, as sometimes the child doth comfort its parents, to utter some few words of consolation, which might cheer you in the present distress, and nerve your arm for future combat with the great enemy of souls. And upon what subject could I address you, which could be more full of consolation than the present? "*Come, behold the works of the Lord.*" Turn ye from man's bloodshed, and behold your God at work; and from the desolations of rebellion, and carnage, and anarchy, turn your eyes here to the *desolations which the Lord hath made* in the earth. You see how, though the battle-bow still doth twang with the arrow, and though the spear is still imbrued in the heart's blood of men, yet he breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder, and burns the chariot in the fire.

We shall regard this text this morning, first, as a *declaration of what has happened*, and secondly, as a *promise of what shall be achieved*.

THE DESOLATIONS OF THE LORD,

I. First of all, we shall look upon it as a DECLARATION OF WHAT HAS ALREADY OCCURRED. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he *hath* made in the earth."

1. And now let us commence the discussion of this part of our subject, by inviting you to the sad spectacle of the desolations which God in his providence has in different ages brought upon divers nations. As it is said of man, that he is full of trouble, so it is with nations; they also are full of sorrows, and some of them exceeding bitter. Wars have devastated countries; plagues have thinned our populations; all kinds of evil have swept athwart the most potent empires, and many of them have been compelled, at last, to yield to the destroying angel, and they slumber with the mighty dead. Doubtless there hath a wail gone up from the face of the earth, when the invasions of barbarians have put an end to the promise of civilisation—when cities, renowned for the culture of the arts and sciences, have suddenly become sacked and burned—when nations that had made great advances in knowledge have been carried away captive, and the sun has been made to go back many a degree on the dial of the earth's history.

But I beg you now turn your eyes, and read the page of history, and mark the various catastrophes which have happened to this world; and I appeal to you, as persons who have understanding, and who can trace the Lord's hand in these matters—have not all these things worked together for good? and hitherto, have not the revolutions, the destructions of empires, and the falls of dynasties, been eminent helps to the progress of the gospel? Far be it from us to lay the blood of men at God's door. Let us not for one moment be guilty of any thought that the sin and the iniquity which have brought war into the world is of God; but, at the same time, as firm believers in the doctrine of predestination, and as firmly holding the great truth of a Divine providence, we must hold that God is the author of the darkness as well as of the light—that he creates the providential evil as well as the good—that while he sendeth the shower from on high he also is the father of the devastating storm. Oh! I say, then, come and see the Lord's hand in "Aceldama, the field of blood." Come ye, and behold the Lord's hand in every shake of the pillars of the constitutions of the monarchies of earth. See the Lord's hand in the crumbling of every tower and the tumbling down of every pinnacle which had aspired to heaven. For he hath done it—he hath done it! God is present everywhere.

And now, I again say, can you not see in all these things a gracious, as well as a terrible God? Can you not feel that everything that as yet happened to the world, has really been for its good? Wars, confusions, and tumults, are but the rough physic wherewith God will purge the diseased body of this earth from its innumerable ills. They are but a terrible tornado with which God shall sweep away the pestilence and fever that lurk in the moral atmosphere; they are but the great hammers with which he breaks in pieces the gates of brass, to make a way for his people; they are but the threshing wains, with which he doth thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff, that Israel may rejoice in the Lord, and that the sons of Jacob may triumph in their God. As it hath been in the beginning, so it shall be even unto the end. The noise and the tumult of war in India shall produce good; the blood of our sisters shall be avenged, not by the sword, but by the gospel. On India's blood-red gods, the arm of the Lord shall yet be felt; the might of him that sits upon the throne shall be acknowledged by the very men, who, first in the fray, have blasphemed the God of Israel. Let us not fear, let us not tremble; the end of all things cometh at last, and that end shall certainly be the desired one, and all the wrath of man shall not frustrate the designs of God. The past troubles assure us for the present, and console us for the future. "Come behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth."

2. But now, turning from this somewhat dreary subject, I must invite you next to look at some desolations which will ever be fair in the eye of the follower of Jesus—the desolations of false worship. What a pleasant theme! Oh, that we had but power truly to enlarge upon it! Will you turn your minds back to the origin of idolatry, and tell me, if you can, what were the names of the first gods whom men profanely worshipped? Are they known? Are not their names blotted out from history? Or, if any of them be mentioned, are they not a bye-word, a hissing, and a reproach? What shall we say of idolatries which are of later date—those which have been noted in Holy Scripture, and therefore handed down to infamy?

Who is he that now bows before the god of Egypt? Hath the sacred Ibis now a worshipper? Do any prostrate themselves before the Nile, and drink her sweet waters, and think her a deity? Hath not that idolatry passed away; and are not the temple and the obelisk still standing,—“the desolations which the Lord hath made in the earth?” Talk we of the gods of Philistia? Do we mention Baal and Dagon? Where are they? We hear their names; they are but the records of the past; but who is he that doth them homage? Who doth now kiss his hands to the queen of heaven? Who boweth himself in the grove of Ashtaroth, or who worshippeth the hosts of heaven, and the chariots of the sun? They have gone! they have gone! Jehovah still standeth, “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” One generation of idols hath passed away, and another cometh, and the desolations stand,—memorials of the might of God.

Turn ye now your eyes to Assyria, that mighty empire. Did she not sit alone? She said she should see no sorrow. Remember Babylon, too, who boasted with her. But where are they, and where are now their gods? With ropes about their necks they have been dragged in triumph by our discoverers; and now in the halls of our land, they stand as memorials of the ignorance of a race that is long since extinct. And then, turn ye to the fairer idolatries of Greece and Rome. Fine poetic conceptions were their gods; theirs was a grand idolatry, one that never shall be forgotten. Despite all its vice and lust, there was such a high mixture of the purest poetry in it, that the mind of man, though it will ever recollect it with sorrow, will still think of it with respect. But where are their gods? Where are the names of their gods? Are not the stars the last memorials of Jupiter, Saturn, and Venus? As if God would make his universe the monument of his destroyed enemy! Where else are their names to be found? Where shall we find a worshipper who adores their false deity? They are past, they are gone! To the moles and to the bats are their images cast, while many an unroofed temple, many a dilapidated shrine stands as memorials of that which was, but is not,—and is passed away for ever.

I suppose there is scarce a kingdom of the world where you do not see God's handiwork in crushing his enemies. It is to the shame of the idolater that he worships a God that his fathers knew not. Although there be some hoary systems of iniquity; in most cases the system is still new—new compared with the giant mountains, the first-born of nature—new compared with those old idolatries that have long since died away in the clouds of forgetfulness. It seems to me to be a very pleasing theme for us to speak of these desolations that God has made. For mark this—again we say it—as it was in the beginning, it is now, and ever shall be. The false Gods shall yet yield their sway; the temples shall yet be unroofed; their houses shall be burned with fire, and their names shall be left for a reproach; their dignity shall not be honoured, neither shall homage be given unto their name. Oh! thou that fearest for the ark of the Lord; thou that tremblest at the firmness with which falsehood keeps its throne; look thou on these desolations and be of good cheer; God hath done mighty things, and he will do them yet again. One can never pass, even in our own country, a ruined abbey, or a destroyed priory, or an old broken down cathedral, without a sweet satisfaction. They are fair ruins, all the fairer because they are ruined, because their inhabitants are forgotten, because the monk no longer prowls our streets, because the nun, though she is here and there to be found, yet is no more honoured, because the apostate church to which they belong has ceased to have power among us, as once it had. We will, therefore, seek to honour God, and in all our journeyings we will think of this text—“Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth.”

3. And now, in the next place, let me ask you to remember what desolations God has made with false philosophies. As for stones and timbers, they are things that must decay in the common course of nature, and one might be apt to think that some of the desolate temples we behold were rather the trophies of the tooth of time, than of the hand of God; but thought is a lasting thing; a bold philosophy that shapes into words the wandering thoughts, which have taken possession of the hearts of men is an enduring thing; and how have some philosophers believed that they were writing books which would be read for ages! They believed that their philosophy most certainly was eternal, and that to the last day their disciples would be had in reverence. Let any classical student remember how many systems of philosophy have passed away before the progress of the kingdom of Christ. The mighty Stagyrice, once the great master of all minds, who even held in sway

many a Christian spirit, at last lost his empire before a purer truth. But I forbear to mention these things; I would rather allude to the passing away of false systems of philosophy in modern times; for there are some of our fathers here, whose hairs have but just turned grey, who can remember the rise and fall of some seven or eight theories of infidelity. You can look back, and you can remember when it was a cursing obscenity with Tom Paine, having just also been the leering, scowling thing that Voltaire made it. You remember how it was the soaring, airy, speculating, scheming thing of Robert Owen; and then you recollect how it became the base, grovelling thing, called Secularism. Men have trembled at that, and have thought it will last. I believe I shall live to see the last Secularist buried, and that at the funeral, there will be attending the leader of some new system of infidelity, who, despite his hatred to God, will have to say over the tomb, out of very spite against the one who precedes him, "Here lies a fool, yclept a Secularist." You need not be afraid of these things; they live such a very little while. A new moon brings a new phase of the system. The thing that they have fashioned with the utmost diligence, and which they deliver with the most earnest declamation, which they think they have proved with the sureness of logic, which they have built, as they think, upon a rock, against which the gates of heaven shall not prevail, how soon it is crumbled to dust, and not a vestige of it is left—scarce a remembrance of it—but all is past away and gone. And even so shall it be. As it was in the beginning, it is now, and ever shall be. "Every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." The words of the wise are like the leaves of the tree of life, and they fade not; but the words of the wicked are like the autumn leaves, all withered, soon to become skeletons, and be blown away by the blast, to be heard of no more.

Planted by the rivers of water, the tree of the church still groweth, like a young cedar, fresh and green. But these things are like the heath in the desert: they see not when good cometh; from earth itself they fail to draw their nourishment, and heaven denies to the cursed thing its genial shower, and therefore soon it dies, and without a memorial it passeth away. Be of good cheer, beloved! It matters not where the enemy attack our intrenchments, they have been, and they shall be routed. We tell the enemies of Christ to look to the thousand defeats that they have suffered beforehand; we warn them of their folly in attacking us again. Woe unto you! woe unto you! Though ye quit yourselves like men, ye Philistines, ye must, ye shall be servants unto Israel. Woe unto you, for the voice of a king is in our midst! Your fathers felt our might. Remember who it was that cut Rahab and wounded the dragon. Your sires have trembled before us; our fathers put ten thousand of your sires to flight, and we will do the same with you, and when we have done it we will say of you, "Aha, aha, aha," and will make you a bye-word with our children, and a proverb with our menials for ever.

4. But my text has a special reference to war—the desolation of war. Have you not noticed how magnificently peace winneth its reprisals at the hand of war? Look through this country. Methinks if the angel of peace should go with us, as we journey through it, and stop at the various ancient towns where there are dismantled castles, and high mounds from which every vestige of a building has long been swept, the angel would look us in the face, and say, "I have done all this: war scattered my peaceful subjects, burned down my cottages, ravaged my temples, and laid my mansions with the dust. But I have attacked war in his own strongholds and I have routed him. Walk through his halls. Can you hear now the tramp of the warrior? Where now the sound of the clarion and the drum?" The sheep is feeding from the cannon's mouth, and the bird builds his nest where once the warrior did hang his helmet. As rare curiosities we dig up the swords and spears of our forefathers, and little do we reck that in this we are doing tribute to peace. For peace is the conqueror. It hath been a long duel, and much blood hath been shed; but peace hath been the victor. War, after all, has but spasmodic triumphs; and again it sinks—it dies; but peace ever reigneth. If she be driven from one part of the earth, yet she dwelleth in another; and while war, with busy hand, is piling up here a wall, and there a rampart, and there a tower, peace—with her gentle finger, is covering o'er the castle with the moss and the ivy, and casting the stone from the top, and letting it lie level with the earth.

I think this is a fine thought for the lover of peace; and who among us is not? Who among us ought not to be? Is not the gospel all peace? And do we not believe, that when the gospel is fully preached, and has its day, wars must cease, to

the end of the earth? I therefore say, beloved brothers and sisters, may we not console ourselves, under all the recent outbreaks of a most bloodthirsty and cruel massacre, in the fact, that God *hath* made desolations, even in war. He hath made desolations in the earth; and, as it hath been, so shall it be even unto the end. There is not now a rampart, which shall not be scaled by peace. Oh! ye hoary bastions! ye shall yet be destroyed; not by the cannon ball, but by something mightier still. Charged with love, this day we shoot against you the great guns of the gospel of Christ, and we believe that they shall move and shake you to your deep foundations, and ye shall crumble; or if ye stand, ye shall be uninhabited, except by the owl and the bittorn. I have a fond belief that the day is coming, when Nelson, on the top of his monument, shall be upset, and Mr. Whitfield set there, or the apostle Paul. I believe that Napier, who stands in the square there, will lose his station. We shall say about these men, "They were very respectable men in the days of our forefathers, who did not know better than to kill one another, but we do not care for them now!" Up goes John Wesley, where stood Napier! Away goes some one else, who was an earnest preacher of the gospel, to occupy the place high over the gate where another warrior rides upon his horse. All these things, the trickery of an ignorant age, the gewgaws of a people who loved bloodshed despite their profession of religion, must yet be broken up for old iron and old brass; every statue that stands in London shall yet be sold, and the price thereof cast at the apostles' feet, that they may make distribution as every man hath need. Wars must cease, and every place where war reigneth and hath now its glory, must yet pass away, and fade and wither. We give all honour to these men now, for these are the days of our ignorance, and God in some degree winketh at us; but when the gospel spreads we shall then find, that when every heart is full of it, it will be impossible for us to tolerate the very name of war; for when God has broken the bow, and burned the chariot, we shall break the image and dash the sculpture into a thousand atoms. We shall think, when the trade is done, the men that did it may well be forgotten.

II. I think there is enough to cheer our hearts, and nerve us all for the great battle of Christ. The desolations of the past should lead us to hope that, there shall be the like, and greater in the future. And now I am to look upon my text, (and very briefly) AS A PROPHECY WHICH IS TO BE FULFILLED.

I should only needlessly occupy your time, if I were to go over all my heads again, because really every person will be quite as competent as I am to discern how what hath been, shall be, in a yet higher sense. But we must observe once more, in noticing this as a prophecy, the figure of our text. It was usual, after a great battle, and especially if peace was then firmly established, for the conquerors to gather up the arms of the vanquished into one great heap, and then setting fire to it all, as Israel did to the spoils of Jericho, everything was consumed. One of these days, when Christ shall come in his glory, or when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ,—(not to say anything which would look like proclaiming the second coming here to-day, although I most firmly believe it, and am sorry that we should ever have allowed in any of our missionary meetings any discussion upon a point which involves the faith of a great proportion of us, who hold this to be as dear and precious a doctrine as any other in the Word of God, and we therefore think it unfair that we should at any time have anything said against this, when we meet together in the common bond of union for the spread of the gospel of Christ; we think it a sore thing that we should be attacked then;—however, leaving all that, whether it be by a spiritual or by a personal coming—we believe that one of these days we shall be roused from our beds by one, who shall say to us, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth;" and when we arrive at the spot appointed, it may be, as the old Ephesians brought out all their books and burned them in the street, we shall see our soldiers marching rank and file, and lay down their arms, and all that they have of murderous implements, piling them into one heap; and happy is that mother's child who shall be there to see it! But see it some one shall, when it shall be truly said, as the fire is kindled over all these things, "He brake the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire."

Happy the day, when every war-horse shall be houghed, when every spear shall become a pruning hook, and every sword shall be made to till the soil which once it stained with blood. It is of that my text prophesies, and my text naturally

brings me to that, as the great climax of the gospel dispensation. This will be the last triumph of Christ; before death itself shall be dead; death's great jackall, war must die also, and then shall there be peace on earth, and the angel shall say, "I have gone up and down through the earth, and the earth sitteth still and is at rest; I heard no tumult of war, nor noise of battle." This is what we hope for. Let us fight on, with diligence and earnestness.

And now, having thus enlarged upon my text, you will permit me to offer a few remarks on a more practical subject.

The question naturally arises, "Why has not this promise been more abundantly fulfilled in our own time?" Many say, "This is Divine sovereignty." Well, we believe Divine sovereignty with all our hearts; it is a doctrine which we delight to dwell upon, and ever to acknowledge; but we cannot make Divine sovereignty the great sepulchre for our sins. We cannot have it that everything is to be laid at the door of Divine sovereignty. We believe there is a sovereignty that ever overrules the sins of the church, as well as of the world. We hold that in the highest and purest sense; but we do think it is a very gross mistake for us always to be saying, if we are defeated, "It is Divine sovereignty." Israel of old did not say so. They looked for the accursed thing that was in the camp. They did not say, "Divine sovereignty!" when they were beaten by Benjamin; but they enquired of the Lord. They were not content to say it was sovereignty. It was sovereignty, no doubt; but they desired to find another reason which, when discovered, might help them to remove the difficulty and enable them to conquer.

And now, beloved, there are many reasons, I think, why we do not prosper as we could desire in the missionary field; and permit me very briefly to hint at one or two. I shall mean no offence to any.

One reason is, because we have not a thorough and entire unanimity with regard to the matter. Now, I know something of the Baptist denomination. I have wandered through every county of England, pretty well, and been to a great number of the churches, and I grieve to see that there are many of our churches still standing totally aloof from the missionary field. If they stood aloof from our particular society, I might not so much regret, if they chose to have one of their own; but they have not one of their own either. There is the great thing for which I would blame them. That they should have some objection to unite with those whom they think to be different from them in doctrinal opinions, would not only be excusable, but possibly there might be occasions when it would be praiseworthy; but that any of us who hold strongly the doctrines of the grace of God, and who, perhaps, give greater prominence than others to the truth, as it was taught by Calvin, and, as we believe, taught by Christ, should therefore have no Missionary Society, is a great and crying sin; and I really think that the defection of a large part of our body, however it may be caused, may be one reason why we have not had such an abundant blessing from God. For, look ye here! Ye say ye can do without them. Very well: so said the people to Joshua, when he led his troops to attack Ai. They said, "Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few." They thought it would be unnecessary, and Joshua left behind him a large part, and only took with him his strong able-bodied men. But, together with "the accursed thing" that Achan had concealed, I believe that the want of all the army of Israel was a part-cause of the defeat at Ai. So it is with us. Ah! if there be a means whereby we can get every brother who calls himself a Baptist, to unite himself with this society, if there be any method of love, if there be any way of making concessions, if there be any mode or any means whereby we all could be bound together in the holy brotherhood as a denomination, I think we are each of us bound to make it. I am sure, as far as I am concerned, I may say that there is not to be found upon the surface of the world, one more strongly attached to the old faith, as I believe it to be—the old, strong, doctrinal faith, coupled with the earnest preaching of the gospel to every creature; yet I find myself not out of place in preaching for a Baptist Mission, nor out of place in helping it, and throwing my whole heart into it. It seems to me it was founded by ourselves: the very men who held these truths were the first leaders in it; and it seems to me the most strange and marvellous thing, that any brother should, from his love to sound doctrine, stand aloof from missions. I am sure it is a stab against our prosperity as churches at home, if we do not come forward to help the missions at large.

I am just saying this, because it may reach to the ears of many of the brethren who are possibly not present to-day. I trust they will think the matter over. We do not ask them to come with us—we will be very glad if they will—but do let them at the very least have a society of their own. Let them be doing something, and do not let it be said that there is a Baptist existing who does not love to send the gospel to the utmost ends of the earth. That maniac nonsense about God doing his own work and our sitting still and doing nothing, ought to have been buried long ago. I know not how to characterize it: it has done us immense damage. We know that God has accomplished his own work; but he always has worked and always will work with means. The men who do not approve of working by means, and stand by and say, "I do not sympathise with it," I do not wonder that God does not work with them: they do not deserve to be worked with, if they think so. Let us cast away that, and let us say, "If we can agree with these brethren who associate in missions we will do so; if we cannot agree with those who associated in one society, we will do it somehow else; but do it we will, for it is our anxious wish that the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." But again, it is not all that, my brethren. It is a want of real love to missions in all our churches: and if this should fall scatheless, and if any should say, "It is not so with the church of which I am a member," let it be so; I do not mean, when I speak generally, to include each individual. It is, I believe, one reason of our want of success, or of that measure of want of success that we have, that there is not a true love of missions in the churches that really help them. Many love missions; they love the cause of Christ, but they do not love Zion better than their own households; but, as far as I can judge, there are many whose attention to the mission field is confined to that one day in the year when the sermon is preached. Some of them confine that day very closely too; for the very smallest threepenny piece that can be discovered is appropriated to the collection on that occasion. They love the mission; yes, they do, but their love is that old sort, of which it is said, "*She never told her love.*" They never tell it by any contribution, but they keep it very still in their hearts. We cannot think but that they do desire that the gospel should fly abroad, for they sing it with lusty lungs and with voice vociferous; but when there is ought to be done they pinch and screw—the purse-string is made half the ordinary circumference, and it cannot be undrawn. There is little to be given for Christ. Christ must take the dregs, the sweepings of their wealth. Ah! if our churches loved missions, if we had more of the true spirit in our midst, we should find scores of our young men rising up to go out and preach the gospel to the heathen; and then the church, taking an interest in the young men who sprang from its own bowels, would think it its duty to maintain its missionary, and send him forth preaching the gospel to every creature.

I remember Edward Irving once preached a sermon to a vast congregation, upon missions; I think he preached for four hours; and the object of the sermon was to prove that we were all wrong—that we ought to send out our missionaries without purse or scrip, giving them nothing! Edward never volunteered to go himself! If he had done so at the end of the sermon, we might have endorsed his philosophy. But he stayed at home, and did not go. Now, we are no believers in that. We think that if a man cannot have help, it is his business to go without it. If a man loves the ministry, if he can only preach Christ's gospel in poverty, God bless him in his poverty; if he has to be a tent maker, like Paul, and to work for his own living, and to go forth without purse or scrip! But as a church we cannot have that. "No, no," we say, "brother, if you are going to a foreign land, and you give your life and health, and if you renounce the comforts of your family, we cannot let you go without anything. The least we can do is to provide for your needs." And one says, "There! though you go without purse or scrip, you cannot get across the sea except you have a ship; I will pay your passage-money." Another says, "You cannot preach to these people without learning the language; and while you are learning the language you must eat and drink. It is quite impossible that you can live by faith, unless you have something that you can nourish your body with: there is the fund to support you, that you may give all your time to the preaching of the Word." Ah! if we did but love Christ better, my brothers and sisters, if we lived nearer to the cross, if we knew more of the value of his blood, if we wept like him over Jerusalem, if we felt more what it was for souls to perish, and what it was for men to be saved—if we did but rejoice

with Christ in the prospect of his seeing the travail of his soul, and being abundantly satisfied—if we did but delight more in the Divine decree, that the kingdoms of this world *shall* be given to Christ, I am sure we should all of us find more ways and more means for the sending forth of the gospel of Christ.

But to conclude. Perhaps, I may say, and some of you may with tears confess 'tis true, it is a want of revived godliness in our church at home, which prevents our hoping for any great success abroad. Ah! brethren, we must till our own vineyards better, or else God will not make us successful in driving the plough across the broad acres of the continents. We want to have our brethren more earnest in prayer. Look at our prayer meetings,—a miserable handful of people, compared with the congregation. We want to have them more earnest in labour. Look at many of our agencies, dying for want of effective labourers, when they are to be found, but they are not willing to come forth. Where is the zeal of olden times? We are not among those that say, "The former times were better than now." In some respects they were—in others not so good; but if they were better, it is not ours to bemoan, but ours to labour to make these better still. We want (gathering up all things into one), we want the outpouring of the Divine Spirit in our churches at home. Just as the anointing oil was first poured on Aaron's head, and then went to the skirts of the garment, so must the Holy Spirit be poured on England, and then shall it go to the utmost borders of the habitable earth. We want to have Pentecosts at home, and then, Medes and Parthians and Elamites shall hear the Word. "Begin at Jerusalem," is Christ's ordinance, and it is Christ's method. We must begin there; and as we begin there, in circles wider and wider and wider, yet the gospel shall spread, till, like a sea of glory, it spreads from pole to pole.

Now, dear brethren and sisters, in repairing to our homes this morning, let us carry away at least one thought. Let us believe firmly that God's purpose shall be accomplished; let us hope joyously that we may be the instruments of its accomplishment; and then let us labour prayerfully, that our wishes may be consummated. What is there that you can do to-day for Christ? Oh! if you love Christ, do not let this day pass till you have done something for him. Speak for him; give to him; pray for him. But let each day be spent as a mission day, and be you each day a missionary for Christ. Begin at home. Enlarge your charity; but begin first at home. Let your own houses be cared for, and then your own synagogues; and then, after that, you may send your missionaries to every part of the earth. I beg for a good collection to-day. It is the first time we have met together in this place, and there is a large number of us; if we do not give a right good collection to-day, we shall not save our own credit. That is a poor way of putting it. It will be a disgrace to us, if we do not give well to-day; but beside that, if we save our own credit, we shall not approve our love to Jesus. Give as God hath given to you.

BOUGHT WITH A PRICE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY, APRIL 18, 1868,

BY THE REV. J. P. COURTENAY,

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IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, UPPER LEWISHAM ROAD.

"Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."—1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

THE Apostle makes known to us a mighty truth in the words immediately preceding our text. He tells us that our bodies are "the temples of the Holy Ghost." What a wondrous communication is this! How it ennobles our fallen humanity; how it should lead us to regard with sacred awe the temple of so great a Deity; how it should induce us to guard it from all impurity and sinful association. If it be true that our poor frail bodies have been made the dwelling place of so blessed a guest, ought it not to move us to dedicate all our faculties and to consecrate all our energies to his blessed service. No longer then may we yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but as instruments of righteousness unto God. Let no evil act, let no unhallowed desire profane this sanctuary of the Holy Spirit; let the character of him who resides within, awe us into veneration for it; let his presence ever keep us in the way of rectitude, make sin more sinful, holiness more desirable, God nearer, and the world farther from our affections. The realization of his nearness to us will strengthen us in the time of weakness, and comfort us in the time of affliction. Earthly temples there are which often excite our wonder and admiration, but they are often temples without a Deity, altars without a sacrifice. If these then are worthy of calling into exercise our better feelings, how much rather should we reverence the living temples of an ever living Deity.

This brings us to consider—

I. The statement of our text—"Ye are not your own."

II. The lesson assigned—"For ye are bought with a price."

III. The reason deduced—"Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

I. "Ye are not your own." Surely this is a solemn truth; we are not our own. We have been so accustomed to look upon ourselves and possessions as absolutely ours, that a statement such as this comes upon us with startling power. Oh, how it condemns the avarice, selfishness, and heartless indifference which men manifest towards each other. How it changes the current of society, introducing new motives, and setting up new objects at which to aim. But, brethren, the world at large recognizes no such "Lord," and counts the idea of the text as a very delusion and a snare; as though we were

self-created, we give ourselves the glory of the work; as though our continuance in life depended upon ourselves alone, we trust in our resources to preserve it; as though our riches were the necessary consequence of our own efforts, and their continued possession entirely at our will. We say, "by the might of my hand I have done it; and by my wisdom, for I am prudent;" and with a self-delusion of the most dangerous kind we hush our souls to a sleep of carnal security, saying, "take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Alas! alas! the great mass of mankind acknowledge no such "lordship" over them, they are guided by their own blind wills, and impelled by their boisterous passions. The Lord has planted the vineyard and hedged it all about; he has furnished it with everything necessary to the happiness and convenience of those who inhabit it; and having accomplished the wondrous work, he has let it out to husbandmen, and has himself gone into a far country. But how sadly the scene has changed since then; these husbandmen have cast off their allegiance to their Lord; his messengers they have beaten, his blessed prophets and apostles they have been stoned; and as the Master looked down upon this scene of disorder and conflict, pity and compassion moved him to a deed of inestimable love. "Surely they will reverence my Son!" Surely the fury of their passion shall cease, and the fierce conflict be hushed into the gentlest calm when they behold my only beloved Son; surely they will cease the strife and return again to obedience and submission, when they behold my great condescension in sending among them my Son; surely their hard hearts will melt, their eyes be filled with tears of holiest contrition, and their hands lay down their weapons of warfare for ever, when they behold my Son. We know the sequel. The presence of the *Heir* evoked no such feelings, on the contrary, it maddened their fury, increased their hate, seared with a hotter iron their hearts, blinded their eyes with a blacker darkness, nerved their hands to greater deeds of violence, and added fuel to their fiery zeal. Earth and hell, men and devils leagued together for the work. And as they saw the heir, with a malignity scarcely human, and with the last gleam of hope which ever cheered the souls of the lost and lighted up their dark abode, they exclaim, 'This is the heir, come let us kill him and let us seize on his inheritance.' And this is the second act in that great mutiny, which first defied the power of the Most High, and opened that pit of awful darkness, which first lighted up the fires that shall never be quenched, and gave food to the worm which never dies. And so the world lieth in the arms of the wicked one; and while men are forging fetters for a never-ending slavery, they boast that they are free, deny the authority of God, and treat with utter contempt the government which He has set up. And now look upon the world, see the motives which animate men, the thoughts in which they indulge, the hopes by which they are inspired, the objects which they have set before them; and will you not find that "SELF" is the spring and source of all their efforts, that this is the "idol" which Satan has set up as his representative, and before which men everywhere bow down and worship. This is the most seductive snare with which the evil one entraps our souls, under the veil of self-gratification of whatever kind, he allows our souls to swim down the tide of life, our passions to carry us impetuously on; we have no conflicts, no struggles. Satan's plans, and the voice of our fallen nature mutually agree, and thus our souls pleasantly pass on until the mighty rapids beyond awake us to our danger; but, alas! as we near the point, the stream becomes swifter, habits become stronger, self-denial becomes burden-

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some, and though we know the danger to be imminent, yet we shut our eyes to the fact, the grim monster comes, the dark stream of death is before us, and the gasping agonising "too late" leaves behind a solemn warning, to which we, who are still present, would do well to take heed. How much of our conversation, time, talents, thoughts, and desires is centred upon self? How eagerly we strive to supply its every craving, and to satisfy its every passion. How promptly we put from us everything which would humiliate it. How perseveringly we seek to render it independent both of God and man. With what costly garments we array it. With what assiduity we nourish it. How much of our precious time is expended in talking about it. How cheerily we chant its praises. How hardly we bear a slight concerning it. How blind we are to its defects. How prone we are to magnify its excellences. With what ecstatic joy we listen to those whose voice of adulation flatter it. How imperious is it in its demands. How unsatisfied with our slavish service. How unlimited in its desires. How heartless in its caprices. Though all others depreciate it, we applaud it. Though all forsake it, we cling to it. Though all are dissatisfied with it, we still look upon it with complacent satisfaction. But, notwithstanding the fact, that men have seized the vineyard as their own, and slain the rightful heir; notwithstanding the fact that men have disowned the sovereignty of God and set up the idol *self* in his stead, yet the truth remains, "*Ye are not your own*"—we are only tenants at will, and when the Lord bids, (and how suddenly and unexpectedly the summons may come,) we must appear before his bar. We are stewards, and as such, we must give an account of our stewardship. God has variously disposed us in his vineyard. *To some he has given wealth*, not as an absolute possession, but simply as a capital with which to trade for Christ; not as a means of gratifying the desires of the flesh, but as an instrument by which we may carry on his mighty work of love. This wealth is not our own, it is God's; we may not, therefore, bury it in a napkin, but rather prayerfully expend it for God. *To others, he has given an influence in society*, the power to direct the wills of men, this, too, is God's, and, consequently, we may not use it for mere selfish purposes; it is a mighty power for good or evil, and its use cannot be a matter of indifference. It is a gift from God; we must not therefore lightly esteem it; the voice of the many must not carry us away, passion must not take the place of reason, but rather it should be our earnest endeavour to use it in that way which will give us most satisfaction in the great day of account. Public opinion would not be that strange fitful thing it is, if every influential man were first to seek God's will as to the disposal of this solemn talent; since if all men were seeking the will of God on the matter, it follows that a more blessed unity on all the great questions of interest would be the result. But, alas! as men act now, truth is rent and torn by its professed adherents. The success of a party, or admiration for a leader, is the real object desired. *To others, God has given great intellectual powers*. This, too, is a talent confided to our trust. It will be well, indeed, if we use it for God. We have received it from God; to His service let us consecrate it. It is not a matter of taste or feeling whether we do so, it is indeed a duty which God has himself imposed, and for the use of which we are responsible. *To others, he has given "much leisure."* He has placed us above want. The world demands no service at our hands, and, therefore, we soon learn to feel "leisure" a burden, and we try to kill it by busily doing nothing. We expend it in frivolity, or in the heartless conventionalities which society imposes; without aim, without a sense of duty, we live from day to day

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a sad spectacle to him who has formed us for his glory. Brethren, let me tell you that time is a mighty talent, and if in worldly concerns it is felt to be precious, how much rather is it the case in spiritual matters.

Brethren, we "are not our own." May this truth have its due influence on our life and conduct. If I were to accuse you of robbing your fellow-men, I can easily account for the vehemence with which you would deny the charge, and the flush of indignant passion with which your cheek would be covered. Will you be less careful of robbing God, will you appropriate to yourselves what belongs to him, or will you not rather seek by prayer and circumspection to realize the truth of the text—"Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

This brings me in the second place to consider the reason assigned.

II. "*For ye are bought with a price.*" By transgression man forfeited his liberty, he took a step which he could never retrace, he performed a deed which he could never undo, he entered upon an alliance which he could never sever, he forged for himself a fetter which he could never snap asunder, he dashed the vase of human happiness to the ground, and its thousand fragments made hope less hopeful, despair more despairing. He had fallen so low that no human hand could reach him, and every effort of amendment showed how powerless was the work. How awful the condition of fallen man. The shipwrecked mariner, as he stands upon his lonely rock, in the midst of the wide waste of waters, may be saved by human aid, and therefore his case is full of hope in comparison with the wretched transgressor. Alas, how gloomy the prospect; darkness which might be felt, reigned throughout the world; and if at times the fire of hell lighted up the prospect, it made the darkness more appalling, the future more foreboding. Man would be born to die; no hope would have cheered our souls; no joy would have lightened our labours; no love would have bound our hearts together; no separation would ever have been soothed by the prospect of a joyous re-union; the mother's bitter hour of sorrow would never have been relieved with the birth of her first-born; the gentle maiden would find her husband's hearth as desolate as the one she had left. Humanly speaking, sympathy would not have soothed us; wealth would not have enriched us; power would not have strengthened us; no competition would have inspired us; no probability of attainment would have sustained us in our pursuits; no smile of happiness would have lighted up our gloomy countenances; no placid serenity would have stilled our throbbing hearts; no hope of rest would have cheered the weary; no bread of life would have been within our reach to satisfy our spiritual hunger. Oh, my brethren, think of this. Think of man without hope, without strength, without sight, under the just displeasure of an Almighty God, without any power to deliver himself, and without any Saviour to save him; look at society without a bond of union, life without an aim, a world under condemnation. Think of the agonising suspense with which we should await the execution of the Divine sentence, and then listen to me while I make known the message of gladness—"Ye are bought with a price." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Realize in all its fulness this wondrous truth, that Jesus Christ has given himself a ransom for all. He has suffered in our stead; he has paid the penalty of our misdeeds; he has satisfied the claims of a holy law, and he has freed us from its curse. If we calculate the worth of our souls by the costliness of the ransom, how great their value.

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If we estimate the worth of our blessings by the depth of agony and suffering which the Saviour bore, then what blessed privileges are ours. Whilst we remember "the price," let us not forget the redemption procured, and whilst our hearts are full of thankfulness for the gracious deliverance, let us think and meditate upon "the price." We were bought, but it was "with a price;" we were prized, and blessed truth, we were bought. Language fails me as I attempt to speak of "the price;" it is a tale of bitter suffering. *Christ purchased us by his humiliation*: he took our nature, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself; he exchanged the throne for the manger, the robes of majesty for the swaddling clothes, the court of heaven for the lowly stable, the companionship of holy beings for contact with weak and sinful men. *Christ purchased us by his long-suffering love*. The smiters, he smote not; the revilers, he reviled not; the cursers, he cursed not; with a forbearance truly divine, he received the indignities which the world in its blind fury heaped upon him. With Almighty power, he yet threatened not. But one word, and the elements would have rid him of his enemies, the earth would have opened its mouth and swallowed them up quick, or the lightning as a devouring flame would have consumed them. But one desire, and ten legions of angels would have been ready to do his bidding, but wondrous forbearance, the Lord received with un murmuring meekness these rude assaults of his foes. Think of his holy nature, and the exquisite torture contact with sin must have caused him; think of the bold daring of the great tempter, and the mildness of the Lord's submission through those forty days of conflict; think of the sophistry of the Sadducees, and the hypocrisy of the Pharisees; think of the treachery of the betrayer, and the weakness of all; remember the despicable vacillation of Pilate, and the rude indignities of his soldiery; forget not the fox-like cunning of Herod, and the undisguised malignity of the Jews; think of dark Gethsemane, those drops, as it were drops of blood; listen to the thrice repeated prayer, that the bitter cup should be taken from him, if a less painful way might be found, and then hear his willing submission—"Not as I will, but as thou wilt." See that staggering, fainting sufferer bearing the shameful cross, until the fear of losing the scene on Calvary induces the Jews to lay it on another's shoulder; see the Lord uplifted high a spectacle to men and angels; hear the bitter raillery of some, mark the cold indifference of others; think of his ceaseless love, as he forgets his pains, to assure the penitent companion of his shame, that they shall join company again in a paradise of joy. And let the sympathy which nature manifested at that dread hour, tell us how great was the character of the sufferer, how deep the sin of the world. A thick black darkness gathered over the earth, symbolizing the thicker, blacker darkness of this dreadful deed. Thus "by his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by his death and resurrection," he has purchased for us salvation. Hark! as that lone voice proclaims the world's redemption, "It is finished!" Thus "ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price."

Permit me to exhort you to reflect much upon this mighty love. It will soften the hardest heart, subdue the most stubborn will; it will soothe your sorrows, heal your wounds, and drive away your fears.

"It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary rest."

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And this brings me to consider, in the third place, the lesson deduced.

III. "*Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*" You see on what this blessed exhortation is grounded. It is love, the love of Christ, yea, the love of Christ in giving himself for us; a stronger motive, a more persuasive inducement, a more gracious reason could not be given than this. Methinks, if some great worldly benefit had been procured for us, we should not have found it difficult to spread abroad the kindness of the donor. And the greater the gift, the greater would be our thankfulness. But if some friend had laid down his life in our stead, how grateful would be our hearts, how ceaseless our remembrance of his love, how animating his example on our life. His self-denial, affection, and sincere friendship would be the subject of our daily theme. How deeply we should feel our unworthiness, how our bursting hearts and tearful eyes would express the reality of our thankfulness. And shall the love of Christ be less constraining; shall his example be less influential; shall we with less gratitude cherish the remembrance of his death? When we consider the position which Christ holds in the estimation of the mass of mankind, there is a great reason why we should glorify God. Christ is the manifestation of the Father; men dishonour Christ, shall we not therefore honour him; men despise him, shall we not therefore exalt him; men deny him, shall we not therefore confess him; men put him to an open shame, shall we not therefore be partakers with him in his humiliation. Christ, so to speak, has left the vindication of his character to us, and men look to us as Christ's representatives. How solemn the charge, how necessary that the Holy Spirit should ever be with us, lest like Judas, we betray our Lord. How carefully the ambassador from a foreign court seeks to sustain the majesty and glory of his royal master; how circumspect, lest by word or deed he should reflect dishonour upon his cause; how specially is he vigilant when surrounded by foes. And we, too, my brethren, are ambassadors for Christ; our Master's deadliest foes surround us, under the mask of friendship they conceal the deadliest hostility, they wrest our words, mark our steps, note all our indiscretions, flatter with their tongue whilst poison is under their lips, and with a zeal which never tires, they seek to entrap our souls. Oh, how vigilant we should be lest we compromise the cause we desire to promote.

First. Then we may glorify Christ by living near to him. Ah, brethren, the secret of our inconsistency is this, we profess what we are not; we try to keep up the outward character when the inward spark has nearly fled. And thus we find the work a heartless task, which neither satisfies God nor gives any comfort to our souls. We fear, that if religion were to have its full influence on our lives, it would interfere with our secular advantages, and thus the stream of holy affection which flows forth on the Sunday is pent up and pressed down during the week. Will you suffer me to say that you take a wrong view of Christianity altogether; it will not interfere with your real advancement in life, rather it will bring down a richer blessing upon you, and you will realize in all its fulness the promise—"Them that honour me, I will honour." *Therefore seek to glorify Christ by living very near to him.* To that end have your stated hours of prayer; communion with God does much to sustain the flame of devotion. It is indeed the breath of our spiritual life, the animating spirit of all Christian effort. Read God's word, it will increase your acquaintance with him; it will manifest to you new glories in the Divine character which shall elicit increased gratitude and love; study its blessed

pages, "make it a lamp unto your feet, and a light unto your path;" it will solve your doubts, guide you in seasons of perplexity, cheer you in your moments of depression, and fling a tinge of glory on all around; make it your rule of life, place it in your counting-houses, and learn from it true principles of commercial morality.

Have your seasons of self-examination. How often you take an account of your progress in your various worldly concerns. Be not less anxious to know what advancement you are making in the acquisition of heavenly treasure. What failures you have made, what defects still exist in your heavenly stewardship. Into what follies have you been betrayed, what evil connections have you formed, how stands your credit in the account of heaven; how may you increase your influence for good; how win jewels to the Saviour's crown.

Have your seasons of spiritual intercourse with your fellow Christians. Much wisdom may be gained by exchanging notes on your spiritual experience, it will draw out your affections, correct false notions, enlarge your sympathies, impel you to go more vigorously forward in the heavenly race. The rebukes of a friend will be true medicine, the warnings of one who has himself fallen will be of precious worth, and his encouragement will be indeed stimulating. If, therefore, you would glorify God, live near to him.

Again: We may glorify Christ by confessing him at all times. Brethren, be assured we have advanced very far in the Divine life when we have learnt this duty; when neither the fear of man, nor a sense of shame, nor a prospect of pecuniary loss has any influence over us, then is the time when we may apply the test, as to whether our esteem of the world is greater than our esteem for Christ; whether we count the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. How various our positions in life, how great our influence. Oh, what a mighty effect would the united Christian confession of this great congregation have upon this neighbourhood; if business men would conduct their trades on Christian principles, if they would wholly seek the glory of God, both in buying and selling; if truthfulness marked their words and integrity their deeds; if they pursued with less impetuosity the dangerous race for gold; if the spirit of accumulation had not quenched the spirit of brotherly love. Ah, my brethren, stop and ponder. You may, you must glorify God in your business. It is God's shop or counting-house; you are but trading for him. Dishonour not your Master; let not the hope of speedy profit ever induce you to trample on misfortune or even indirectly to encourage dishonesty. Let then the principles on which you act in your commercial character be indeed a witness for Christ.

We must glorify Christ in our homes. Kind forbearance, a genial temper, a loving sympathy, a tender heart; in our homes to erect the family altar will do much to glorify the Lord; let the relationship of masters and servants be for a season merged in that loftier fellowship in Christ, when the sacred volume is read before us, and the evening prayer like sweetest incense ascends to the Father of us all.

We must confess Christ in seasons of recreation. Two souls may meet together for the first and last time on earth; a word of warning, a simple truth from the treasury of God's word may save the soul of the stranger. Indeed, the Saviour in his love may have sent him to thee for the purpose. Yea, my brethren, you may witness for Christ continually. If thy light of Christian consistency shines brightly, thou art unconsciously winning

souls to Christ; if thy heart be full of Christ, thy countenance will reflect his glory, and thy tongue will eloquently spread abroad his praise.

Let us witness for Christ in all our conversation. Let not the world have all our words, but let Christ more frequently engage our thoughts. Yes, brethren, let us witness for Christ, in the social party, in the chamber of sickness, before servants, and before mistresses, at all times, in the mart and on the exchange, in the steamboat and on the rail, in season and out of season, by night and by day, "warning every man, and teaching every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

Again: We may glorify Christ by suffering for him. St. Paul, when writing from his prison at Rome, says, "The things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places, and many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds are much more bold to speak the word without fear." So that the poor despised prisoner was in deed glorifying God in the midst of his adversity, making the disciples bolder for the truth, spreading abroad the Saviour's love in the midst of the Roman army, introducing the gospel into the very palace of the Cæsars, and as in the case of Onesimus, begetting spiritual sons in his bonds. God makes the wrath of man to praise him; and those who persecuted the church at Jerusalem, unconsciously sent the disciples everywhere preaching the word.

Again: We can glorify God in our afflictions. Thus many a poor afflicted saint has borne a glorious testimony for Christ, from her bed of suffering, the un murmuring temper, the holy calm, the placid sweetness, the bright hope and cheerful contentment have shed a sacred influence for good in the neighbourhood around.

Finally. We must glorify Christ before his enemies. This is hard to do, and especially so if they are above us in position. Still, be assured, that if we prize the favour of Christ above all things else, our conflict of interests will be very feeble. Once upon a time, a poor prisoner stood before the bar of judgment, the judge was no less a person than a king, he was surrounded by all the pomp which makes majesty so impressive. His queen, arrayed in her costliest robes sat beside him; his captains and honourable men surrounded the royal chair. The court was filled with the prisoner's most hostile foes. How awe-inspiring the scene, how terrible the conflict in that poor prisoner's breast. Will he compromise his cause? Will he falter in his speech as he addresses the crowded court? The king grants permission to the prisoner to make his defence. Every eye is fixed upon him, every ear stretched to catch the first accents of his voice. With an ease and dignity which astonish the spectators he commences his defence. His power of utterance increases as he proceeds, his arguments become more weighty, his eloquence more thrilling, its effect more powerful, until the judge confesses to the prisoner, *almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.* Let us copy the example of St. Paul, and like him we may bring the bitterest opponents of the cross to confess a similar confession. And let us remember that we "are not our own, for we are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

The New Park Street Pulpit.

CHRIST GLORIFIED AS THE BUILDER OF HIS CHURCH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 2, 1853, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory."—Zechariah vi. 13.

"There's music in all things, if men had ears;
This world is but the echo of the spheres."

HEAVEN singeth evermore. Before the throne of God, angels and redeemed saints extol his name. And this world is singing too; sometimes with the loud noise of the rolling thunder, of the boiling sea, of the dashing cataract, and of the lowing cattle; and often with that still, solemn harmony, which floweth from the vast creation, when in its silence it praises God. Such is the song which gushes in silence from the mountain lifting its head to the sky, covering its face sometimes with the wings of mist, and at other times unveiling its snow-white brow before its Maker, and reflecting back his sunshine, gratefully thanking him for the light with which it has been made to glisten, and for the gladness of which it is the solitary spectator, as in its grandeur it looks down upon the laughing valleys. The tune to which heaven and earth are set, is the same. In heaven they sing, "The Lord be exalted; let his name be magnified for ever." And the earth singeth the same: "Great art thou in thy works, O Lord! and unto thee be glory." It would seem, therefore, a strange anomaly if the church, the temple of the living God, should be void of song, and we bless God that such an anomaly doth not exist, for "day and night they praise God in his temple." And while it is true the ceaseless circles of the starry heavens are praising him without cessation, it is also true that the stars of earth, the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, are each of them evermore singing their hymns of praise to him. To-day, in this house, thousands of voices shout his name, and when the sun of to-day shall set, it shall rise upon another land, where Christian hearts awakened, shall begin to praise as we have just concluded; and when to-morrow we shall enter upon the business of the week, we will praise him when we rise, we will praise him when we retire to rest, and we will solace ourselves with the sweet thought, that when the link of praise here is covered with darkness, another golden link is sparkling in the sunshine in the lands where the sun is rising when it sets upon us.

And mark how the music of the church is set to the same tune as that of heaven and earth—"Great God, thou art to be magnified." Is not this the unanimous song of all the redeemed below? When we sing, is not this the sole burden of our hosannahs and hallelujahs?—"Unto him that liveth and sitteth upon the throne, unto him be glory, world without end." Now, my text is one note of the song. May God help me to understand, and to make you to understand it also. "*He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory.*" We all know that the Lord Jesus Christ is here alluded to; for the context runs—"Behold the man, whose name is the Branch"—which title is ever applied to the Messiah, Jesus

Christ of Nazareth. "He shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

Now we shall notice this morning, first of all, the *temple*, that is the Church of Christ. We shall notice next, its *builder*—"He," that is Jesus, "shall build the temple." Then we shall stop a moment and pause to admire his *glory*.—"He shall bear the glory." Then we shall attempt, under the good hand of the Holy Spirit, to make some *practical application of the subject*.

I. The first point is **THE TEMPLE**. The temple is the church of God; and here let me begin by just observing, that when I use the term "church of God," I use it in a very different sense from that in which it is sometimes understood. It is usual with many Church of England people, to use the term "church" as specially applying to the bishops, archdeacons, rectors, curates, and so forth: these are said to be the church, and the young man who becomes a pastor of any congregation is said to "enter the church." Now I believe that such a use of the term is not scriptural. I would never for one moment grant to any man that the ministers of the gospel constitute the church. If you speak of the army, the whole of the soldiers constitute it; the officers may sometimes be spoken of first and foremost, but still the private soldier is as much a part of the army as the highest officer. And it is so in the church of God; all Christians constitute the church. Any company of Christian men, gathered together in holy bonds of communion for the purpose of receiving God's ordinances, and preaching what they regard to be God's truths, is a church; and the whole of these churches gathered into one, in fact all the true believers in Christ scattered throughout the world, constitute the One true Universal Apostolic Church, built upon a rock, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. Do not imagine, therefore, when I speak at any time of the church, that I mean the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and some twenty other dignitaries, and the whole host of ministers. No, nor when I speak of the church do I mean the deacons, the elders, and pastors of the Baptist denomination, or any other—I mean all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth, for these make up the one universal church which hath communion in itself with itself, not always in the outward sign, but always in the inward grace; the church which was elect of God before the foundation of the world, which was redeemed by Christ with his own precious blood, which has been called by his Spirit, which is preserved by his grace, and which at last shall be gathered in to make the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.

Well, now, this church is called the temple of God, and Christ is said to be its builder. Why is the church called the temple? I reply very briefly, because the temple was the place where *God especially dwell*. It was true that he did not wholly dwell in the temple made with hands, of man's building, which Solomon piled upon the mount of Sion, but it is true that in a special sense the Infinite Majesty there held its tabernacle and its dwelling place. Between the wings of the overshadowing cherubim, there did shine the bright light of the Shekinah, the type, the manifestation, and the proof of the special presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel. It is true he is everywhere; in the highest heavens and in the deepest hell God is to found, but especially did he dwell in his temple, so that when his people prayed, they were bidden to turn their eye towards the temple, as Daniel did, when he opened his window towards Jerusalem, and offered his prayer. Now, such is the church. If you would find God, he dwelleth on every hill-top, and in every valley; God is everywhere in creation; but if you want a special display of him, if you would know what is the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, the inner chamber of divinity, you must go where you find the church of true believers, for it is here he makes his continual residence known—in the hearts of the humble and contrite, who tremble at his word.

Again, the temple was the place of the *clearest manifestation*. He who would see God the best of all, must see him in his temple. I repeat, he was to be discovered everywhere. If you stood on Carmel's top, and looked towards the great sea wherein are all the ships and the great leviathan he had made to play therein, there might God be discovered in his great strength. If you turned your eye on the same hill, and looked towards the vale of Esdraelon, there was God to be seen in every blade of grass, in every sheep feeding by the stream; God was everywhere to be

discovered; but if you would see him best, it is not on Bashan, it is not on Hermon, it is not on Tabor; it was on Mount Zion that the Lord God loved to make a special display of himself. It is so with the Church. God is to be seen in the midst of her; her helper, her strength, her teacher, her guide, her deliverer, her sanctifier. In holy communion—in the breaking of bread, and in the pouring out of wine, in holy baptism—in the immersion of believers into the Lord Jesus Christ, in the preaching of the Word, in the constant declaration of the great salvation of Jesus, in the lifting up of the cross, in the high exalting of him that died upon it, in the preaching of the Covenant, in the declaration of the grace of God—here is he to be seen, here is his name written in brighter letters and in clearer lines than elsewhere the wide world o'er. Hence his church is said to be his temple. Oh, Christian people, you know this, for God dwelleth in you, and walketh with you; you dwell in him, and he dwells in you—"the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." It is your happy privilege to walk with God; he manifests himself to you, as he doth not unto the world; he takes you into his inner chamber; he manifests his love; the song of Solomon is sung in your courts, and nowhere else; it is not the song of the wide world, it is the sonnet of the inner chamber, the song of the house of wine, the music of the banquet. You understand this, for you have been brought into near acquaintance with Christ; you have been made to lean your head upon his bosom, you have been taught to look into his heart, and to see eternal thoughts of love there towards you. You know well, better than we can tell you, what it is to be the temple of the living God.

And once more; we should fail to describe the reason why the word "temple" is used to picture the church, if we did not observe that the church is like the temple—a place of worship. There was a law passed by God, that no offering should be presented to him except upon the one altar in his temple at Jerusalem, and that law is extant to this day. No acceptable service can be offered to Christ except by his church. Only those who believe in Christ can offer songs, and prayers, and praises, that shall be received of God. Whatever ordinances you attend to, who are without Christ in your hearts, you do belie that ordinance and prostitute it—you do not honour God therein. Two men go up to the temple to pray; the one a believer, the other an unbeliever. He that is an unbeliever may have the gifts of oratory, the mightiest fluency of speech, but his prayer is an abomination unto God, whilst the feeblest utterance of the true believer is received with smiles by him that sits upon the throne. Two persons go to the Master's table—the one loveth the ordinance in its outward sign, and reverenceth it with superstition, but he knows not Christ; the other believes in Jesus, and knows how to eat his flesh and drink his blood as a worthy partaker in that divine ordinance; God is honoured in the one, the ordinance is dishonoured in the other. Two persons come to holy Baptism: the one loves the Master, believes in his name, and trusts him; he is baptized, he honours Christ. Another comes, perhaps an unconscious infant, one who is incapable of faith, or hath no faith; he dishonours God, he dishonours the ordinance in venturing to touch it, when he is not one of the church, and therefore hath no right to offer sacrifice of prayer and praise unto the Lord our God. There is only one altar—that is, Christ; and there is only one set of priests, namely, the church of God, the men chosen out of the world to be clothed in white robes to minister at his altar, and whosoever besides pretendeth to worship God, worshippeth him not aright. His offering is like that of Cain; God hath no respect to his sacrifice, "for without faith it is impossible to please God." We care not who it is that doth the act; unless he believeth, he cannot win pleasure from God, nor shall his sacrifice be accepted.

I have thus noted the reasons why the church is said to be the temple. As there was only one temple, so there is only one church. That one church is his holy place, where God dwells, where God accepts worship, where songs of praise are daily uttered, and the smoking incense of prayer continually comes up before his nostrils with acceptance.

II. Now, we have an interesting subject in the second part of our text. "He shall build the temple of the Lord." CHRIST IS THE CHURCH'S ONLY BUILDER. Now, I shall want to make a parallel between Christ's building the church, and Solomon, as the builder of the first temple. When Solomon built the temple, the first thing he did was to obtain instructions with regard to the model upon which he should build it. Solomon was exceeding wise, but I do not think he was his own

architect. The Lord, who had shown the pattern of the old tabernacle in the wilderness to Moses, doubtless showed the pattern of the temple to Solomon, so that the pillars, and the roof, and the floor thereof, were all ordained of God, and every one of them settled in heaven. Now, Christ Jesus in this is no Solomon; with this exception, that being God over all, blessed for ever, he was his own architect. Christ has made the plan of his church. You and I have made a great many plans for the building up of that church. The Presbyterian makes his plans extremely precise. He will put an elder in every corner, and the Presbytery is the great ground-work—the pillar and the ground of the truth; and right is he in so doing to an extent. The Episcopalian builds his temple too. He will have a bishop at the door-post, and he will have a priest to shut the gate. He will have everything built according to the model that was seen by Cranmer in the mount, if he ever was there at all. And those of us who are of severer discipline, and have a simpler style, must have Christ's church always built in the congregational order; every congregation distinct and separate, and governed by its own bishop, and deacons, and elders. But mark, Christ does not attend to our points of church government, for there is one part of Christ's church that is Episcopalian, and looks as if a bishop of the Church of England had ordered it; another part is Presbyterian; another, Baptist; another, Congregational; and yet all these styles of architecture somehow fused into one by the Great Architect, make that goodly structure which is called "the temple of Christ, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." Christ must be his own architect. He will bring out different points of truth in different ways. Why, I believe that different denominations are sent on purpose to set out different truths. There are some of our brethren a little too high, they bring out better than any other people, the grand old truths of sovereign grace. There are some, on the other hand, a little too low; they bring out with great clearness the great and truthful doctrines of man's responsibility. So that two truths that might have been neglected, either the one or the other, if only one form of Christianity existed, are both brought out, both made resplendent, by the different denominations of God's people, who are alike chosen of God, and precious to him.

God forbid I should say anything that would bolster up any in their errors; nevertheless God's people, even in error, are a precious people. Even when they seem to be as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter, they are still comparable to fine gold. Rest assured that the Lord hath deep designs to answer, even by the divisions of his church. We must not interfere with Christ's reasons, nor with his style of architecture. Every stone that is in the temple, Jesus Christ ordained should be put where it is; even those stones that are most contemptible and unseen, were put in their places by him. There is not one board of cedar, one piece of burnished pinnacle, that was not foreseen and pre-arranged in that eternal covenant of grace which was the great plan that Christ, the Almighty Architect, did draw for the building of the temple to his praise. Christ, then, is the only Architect, and he shall bear the glory, for he designed the building.

Now, you remember that when Solomon set to work to build his temple, he found a mountain ready for his purpose, mount Moriah. The top of it was not quite broad enough; he had therefore to enlarge it, so that there might be room for the beautiful temple, the joy of the whole earth. When Jesus Christ came to build his temple, he found no mountain on which to build it; he had no mountain in our nature, he had to find a mountain in his own, and the mountain upon which he has built his church is the mountain of his own unchangeable affection, his own strong love, his own omnipotent grace and infallible truthfulness. It is this that constitutes the mountain upon which the church is built, and on this the foundation hath been digged, and the great stones laid in the trenches with oaths and promises and blood to make them stand secure, even though earth should rock and all creation suffer decay.

Then after Solomon had his mountain ready and the foundation builded, the next trouble was he had no trees near at hand: there were, however, fine trees growing in Lebanon, but his servants had not skill enough to cut them down. He had, therefore, to send for Hiram, king of Tyre, with his servants, to cut down the trees upon Lebanon, which, after being shaped according to the model, were to be sent by rafts or floats to Joppa, the port nearest to Jerusalem, and there brought a short distance over land for the building of the temple. He had to do the same with the stones of the quarry; for the different stones that were needed

for the building had to be hewn out of the quarry by Hiram's servants, assisted by some of Solomon's people, who had inferior skill and therefore were set about the more laborious and rougher parts of the work. The same fact you will notice, if you will read the history of the building of Solomon's temple, occurred with regard to the making of the vessels of the house. It is said that Hiram did cast them, and Solomon found the gold; and the moulds were made in the great plain, and Solomon did cast them there, with Hiram for his chief designer and director.

Ah! but herein Solomon fails to be a type of Christ. Christ builds the temple himself. There stand the cedars of Lebanon that the Lord hath planted, but they are not ready for the building; they are not cut down, nor shaped, nor made into those planks of cedar, whose odoriferous beauty shall make glad the courts of the Lord in Paradise. No; Jesus Christ must cut them down with the axe of conviction; he must cut them up with the great saw of his law; he must plane and polish them with his holy gospel. And when he hath made them fit to be pillars in the house of the Lord, then they shall be carried across the sea to heaven; then shall they be placed in his temple for ever. No Hiram is needed. The axe is in *his* hand, the plane is in *his* hand too. He understandeth well that business. Was he not a carpenter on earth? And spiritually, he shall be the same to his church for ever and ever. It is even the same with the stones of the temple. We are like rough stones in the quarry. Behold the hole of the pit whence we were digged, and the rock whence we were hewn. But we were hewn out of that rock by no hand but Christ's. He raised up seed unto Abraham out of the stones of the pit; it was his own hammer that broke the rock in pieces, and his own arm of strength that wielded the hammer, when he dashed us from the rock of our sin. Though we are each of us being polished, so that we may be ready for the temple, yet there is nothing that polishes but Christ. Afflictions cannot sanctify us, except as they are used by Christ, as his mallet and his chisel. Our joys and our efforts cannot make us ready for heaven, apart from the hand of Jesus who fashioneth our hearts aright, and prepareth us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Thus you notice that herein Jesus Christ excels Solomon, for he provide: all the materials. He hews them himself; he rough-casts them first, and then afterwards, during life, polishes them till he makes them ready to transport them to the hill of God, whereon his temple is to be built. I was thinking what a pretty figure was that floating of the trees of Lebanon after being sawn into planks and made ready to be fixed as pillars of the temple—what a fine emblem of death! Is it not just so with us? Here we grow, and are at length cut down, and made ready to become pillars of the temple. Across the stream of death, we are ferried by a loving hand, and brought to the port of Jerusalem, where we are safely landed, to go no more out for ever, but to abide as eternal pillars in the temple of our Lord. Now, you know the Tyrians floated these rafts; but no stranger, no foreigner shall float us across the stream of death. It is remarkable that Jesus Christ always uses expressions with regard to his people, which impute their death to him alone. You will recollect the expression in the Revelation—"Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." But when he begins to reap, not the vintage, which represents the wicked that were to be crushed, but the harvest which represents the godly; then it is said, "He that sat upon the throne thrust in the sickle." He did not leave it to his angels, he did it himself. It is so with the bringing of those planks, and the moving of those stones. I say no king of Tyre and Sidon shall do it; Jesus Christ, who on the death of death and hell's destruction, he himself shall pilot us across the stream, and land us safe on Canaan's side. "He shall build the temple of the Lord."

Well, after these things were brought, Solomon had to employ many thousand workmen to put them in their proper places. You know that in Solomon's temple there was no sound of hammer heard; for the stones were made ready in the quarries, and brought all shaped and marked so that the masons might know the exact spot in which they were to be placed; so that no sound of iron was needed. All the planks and timbers were carried to their right places, and all the catches with which they were to be linked together were prepared, so that there might not even be the driving of a nail—everything was ready beforehand. It is the same with us. When we get to heaven, there will be no sanctifying us there, no squaring us with affliction, no hammering us with the rod, no

making us meet there. We must be made meet here; and blessed be his name, all *that* Christ will do beforehand. When we get there, we shall not need angels to put this member of the church in one place, and that member in another; Christ who brought the stones from the quarry and made them ready, shall himself place the people in their inheritance in paradise. For he has himself said, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go away, I will come again and I will receive you unto myself." Christ shall be his own usher; he shall receive his people himself; he shall stand at the gates of heaven himself to take his own people, and to put them in their allotted heritage in the land of the blessed.

I have no doubt you have read many times the story of Solomon's temple, and you have noticed that he overlaid all the temple with gold. He provided much of the substance, but his father David brought him a good store. Now Jesus will overlay all of us with gold, when he builds us in heaven. Do not imagine we shall be in heaven what we are to-day. No, beloved, if the cedar could see itself after it had been made into a pillar, it would not know itself. If you could see yourselves as you shall be made, you would say, "It doth not yet appear" how great we must be made." Nor were these pillars of cedars to be left naked and unadorned—though they had been fair and lovely then—they were overlaid with sheets of gold. So shall we be. "It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body," plated with pure gold: no longer what it was, but precious, lustrous, glorified.

And in the temple, we understand, there was a great brazen sea, in which the priests did wash themselves, and there were other brazen seas, in which they washed the lambs and bullocks when they were offered. In heaven there is a great laver, in which all our souls have been washed, "for they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb." Now Christ himself prepares this sacred sea. He filled it with blood from his own veins. As for our prayers and praises, the great laver in which they are washed, was also made and filled by Christ; so that they with us are clean, and we offer acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. I say again, before I leave this head, there is no part of the great temple of the church, which was not made by Christ. There is a great deal in the church on earth, that Christ had nothing to do with; but there is nothing in his true church, and nothing especially in his glorified church, which was not put there by him. Therefore, we may well come to the conclusion, on the last head, here, he shall bear all the glory, for he was the only builder of it.

III. Now, what a sweet thing it is to try and GLORIFY CHRIST. I am happy this morning to have a subject that will magnify my Master. But is it not a sad thing, that when we would magnify Christ most, our poor, failing lips refuse to speak. Oh, if you would know my Master's glory, you must see it for yourselves, for like the Queen of Sheba, the half can never be told you, even by those who know him most and love him best. Half his glory never can be told. Pause awhile, and let me endeavour to address to you a few loving words. Your Master, O ye saints of the Lord, has prepared you, and will build you into his temple. Speak and say, he *shall* have all the glory. Let us note, first, that the glory which he shall have will be a weighty glory. Dr. Gill says, "the expression implies, that the glory will be a weighty one, for it said, he shall bear the glory." "They shall hang," says another expression, "upon him all the glory of his Father's house;" and in another place, we are told, that there is "an exceeding weight of glory," which is prepared for the righteous. How great then, the weight of glory which shall be given to Christ. Oh, think not that Christ is to be glorified in such humble measure, as he is on earth. The songs of heaven are nobler strains than ours. The hearts of the redeemed pay him loftier homage than we can offer. Try not to judge of the magnificence of Christ by the pomp of kings, or by the reverence paid to mighty men on earth. His glory far surpasses all the glory of this time and space. The honour which shall be bestowed upon him, is as the brightness of the sun, the honours of earth are but the twinklings of a fading star. Before him, at this very day, principalities and powers do bow themselves. Ten thousand times ten thousand seraphim wait at his footstool. "The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels," and all these wait his beck and his command. And as for his redeemed, how do they magnify him? never staying, never changing, never wearying; they raise their shout higher, and higher, and higher, and yet louder, and louder still, the strain is

lifted up, and evermore it is the same. "To him that liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore, unto him be glory, world without end."

And note again, that this glory is *undivided* glory. In the church of Christ in heaven, no one is glorified but Christ. He who is honoured on earth has some one to share the honour with him, some inferior helper who laboured with him in the work; but Christ has none. He is glorified, and it is all his own glory. Oh, when you get to heaven, ye children of God, will ye praise any but your Master? Calvinists, to-day you love John Calvin; will you praise him there? Lutheran, to-day thou dost love the memory of that stern reformer; wilt thou sing the song of Luther in heaven? Follower of Wesley, thou hast a reverence for that evangelist; wilt thou in heaven have a note for John Wesley? None, none, none! Giving up all names and all honours of men, the strain shall rise in undivided and unjarring unison "unto him that loved us, that washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever."

But again: he shall have *all* the glory; all that can be conceived, all that can be desired, all that can be imagined shall come to him. To-day, you praise him, but not as you can wish; in heaven you shall praise him to the summit of your desire. To-day you see him magnified, but you see not all things put under him; in heaven all things shall acknowledge his dominion. There every knee shall bow before him, and every tongue confess that he is Lord. He shall have *all* the glory.

But to conclude on this point; this glory is *continual* glory. It says he *shall* bear all the glory. When shall this dominion become effete? When shall this promise be so fulfilled that it is put away as a worn out garment? Never,

"While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures,"

we shall never leave off praising Christ. We think we can almost guess how we shall feel when we get to heaven, with regard to our Master. Methinks if I should ever be privileged to behold his blessed face with joy, I shall want nothing but to be allowed to approach his throne, and cast what little honour I may have before his feet, and then be there and ever more adore the matchless splendour of his love, the marvels of his might. Suppose some one entering were to say to the redeemed, "Suspend your songs for a moment! Ye have been praising Christ, lo, these six thousand years; many of you have without cessation praised him now these many centuries! Stop your song a moment; pause and give your songs to some one else for an instant." Oh, can you conceive the scorn with which the myriad eyes of the redeemed would smite the tempter? "Stop from praising him! No, never. 'Time may stop, for it shall be no more; the world may stop, for its revolutions must cease; the universe may stop its cycles and the movings of its world, but for us to stop our songs—never, never!—and it shall be said, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." He shall have all the glory, and he shall have it for ever; his name shall endure for ever; his name shall continue as long as the sun; men shall be blessed in him, and all generations shall call him blessed; therefore shall they praise him for ever and ever.

IV. Now, in conclusion, let us just make a PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF OUR TEXT. Brothers and sisters, are we to-day built upon Christ? Can we say, that we hope that we are a part of his temple; that his handiwork has been exhibited upon us, and that we are built together with Christ? If so, listen to one word of exhortation. Let us evermore honour him. Oh! methinks, every beam of cedar, and every slab of gold, and every stone of the temple, felt honoured when it was raised up to be a part of the fabric for Jehovah's praise. And if that cedar, that marble, could have been vocal in that day when the flame descended from heaven, the token of Jehovah's presence, the stone, and the cedar, and the gold, and the silver, and the brass, all would have burst out into song, and would have said, "We praise thee, O God, for thou hast made the gold more than gold, and the cedar more than cedar, inasmuch as thou hast consecrated us to be the temple of thine indwelling." And now, will you not do the same? O my brothers and sisters! God has highly honoured you to be stones in the temple of Christ. When you think of what you were, and what you might have been; how you might have been stones in the black dungeons of vengeance for ever, dark dank stones, where the moss, and the weed, and the slimy thing for ever might have lived; disgraced, abandoned, cast

away in blackness of darkness for ever—when you think of this, and then remember that you are stones in Jehovah's temple,—living stones,—oh, ye must say that ye will praise him, for man is more than man, now that God dwelleth in him. Daughters of Jerusalem, rejoice! for you are more than women now. Sons of Israel, rejoice! for your manhood is exalted; he hath made you temples of the Holy Ghost—God dwelling in you and you in him." Go out from this place and sing his praise; go forth to honour him; and while the dumb world wants you to be its mouth, go and speak for the mountain, for the hill, for the lake, for the river, for the oak, and for the insect; speak for all things; for you are to be like the temple, the seat of the worship of all worlds; you are to be like the priests and offerers of the sacrifices of all creatures.

Let me address myself last of all to others of you. Alas! my hearers, I have many here who have no portion in Israel, neither any lot in Jacob. How many of you there are, who are not stones in the spiritual temple, never to be used in the building up of God's Jerusalem. Let me ask you one thing; it may seem a slight thing to-day to be left out of the muster-roll of Christ's church,—will it seem a slight thing to be left out, when Christ shall call for his people? When you are all assembled around his great white throne at last, and the books shall be opened, oh! how dread the suspense, while name after name is read! how dreadful your suspense, when it comes to the last name, and yours has been left out! That verse of our hymn has often impressed me very solemnly:

"I love to meet among them now,
Before thy gracious feet to bow,
Though vilest of them all;
But can I bear the piercing thought—
What if my name should be left out,
When thou for them shalt call?"

Sinner, conceive it! The list is read, and thy name unmentioned. Laugh at religion now! scoff at Christ now! now that the angels are gathering for the judgment; now that the trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long; now that the heavens are red with fire, that the great furnace of hell o'erleaps its boundary, and is about to encircle thee in its flame; now despise religion! Ah! no. I see thee. Now thy stiff knees are bending, now thy bold forehead for the first time is covered with the hot sweat of trembling, now thine eyes that once were full of scorn are full of tears; thou dost look on him whom thou didst despise, and thou art weeping for thy sin. O sinner, it will be too late then; there is no cutting of the stone after it gets to Jerusalem. Where thou fallest there thou'lt rest. Where judgment finds thee, there eternity shall leave thee. Time shall be no more when judgment comes, and when time is no more, change is impossible! In eternity there can be no change, no deliverance, no signing of acquittal. Once lost, lost for ever; once damned, damned to all eternity. Wilt thou choose this and despise Christ? or wilt thou have Christ and have heaven? I charge you by him that shall judge the quick and the dead, whose I am, and whom I serve, who is the searcher of all hearts, choose ye this day whom ye will serve. If sin be best serve sin, and reap its wages. If you can make your bed in hell, if you can endure eternal burnings, be honest with yourself, and look at the wages while you do the work. But if you would have heaven, if you would be amongst the many who shall be glorified with Christ, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; believe now, to-day. "If ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Men, brethren, and fathers, believe and live; cast yourself at Jesus' feet, put your trust in him,

"Renounce thy works and ways with grief,
And fly to this most sure relief;"

giving up all you are to come to him, to be saved by him now, and saved eternally. O Lord, bless my weak but earnest appeal, for Christ's sake. Amen.

[No. 199 will contain the ANNUAL SERMON on behalf of the SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION, preached by the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON, at Bloomsbury Chapel, on Tuesday evening, May 4th, 1835. Will be published on Monday next, the 10th instant.]

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER—A STEWARD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON TUESDAY EVENING, MAY 4, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT BLOOMSBURY CHAPEL,

On behalf of the Sunday School Union.

"Give an account of thy stewardship."—Luke xvi. 2.

We have heard many times in our lives, that we are all stewards to Almighty God. We hold it as a solemn truth of our religion, that the rich man is responsible for the use which he makes of his wealth; that the talented man must give an account to God of the interest which he getteth upon his talents; that every one of us, in proportion to our time and opportunities, must give an account for himself before Almighty God. But, my dear brothers and sisters, our responsibility is even deeper and greater than that of other men. We have the ordinary responsibility which falls upon all professors of religion, to give an account of all we have to God; but besides this, you and I have the extraordinary responsibilities of our official standing—you, as teachers for Christ in your classes; and others of us as preachers for him before the great congregation. The first responsibility is too heavy for any man to fulfil. Apart from divine grace, it is not possible that any man should so use all that God has given him as to be accepted at last with a "Well done thou good and faithful servant;" yet even if that were possible, it would still remain an utter impossibility for us fully to sustain the fearful weight of responsibility which rests upon us as teachers of the Word of God to our fellow immortals. Upon our necks there are two yokes; Sovereign grace can make them light and easy, but apart from that they will gall our shoulders; for they are, of themselves, too heavy for us to bear. Common responsibility is as Solomon's whip; but extraordinary responsibility derived from official standing, when not regarded, will be as the scorpion of Rehoboam, its little finger shall be thicker than its father's loins. Woe unto the watchman who warns them not; woe unto the minister who fails to teach the truth; woe unto the Sabbath-school teacher who is unfaithful to his trust. Now, let us try to stir one another up, upon this seriously important matter. You will pray for me while I preach, that I may utter some things that may do good to all now present, and I will labour that God may, in answer to your prayers, give me words and thoughts which shall be blessed to you.

Now, first, let me show the meaning of our being stewards; then let us consider what kind of account we shall have to give; and lastly, let us notice the days of reckoning when we OUGHT to cast up our account, and the days of reckoning when we MUST give in our account.

I. First, then, THE STEWARD—WHAT IS HE?

In the first place, the steward is a servant. He is one of the greatest of servants, but he is only a servant. Perhaps he is the bailiff of a farm, and looks, to all intents and purposes, like a country farmer: he rides over his master's estate, and has many men under him; still he is only a servant, he is under authority, he is only a steward. Perhaps he is steward in the house of some gentleman, who employs him to see after the whole of his establishment, in order that he may be free from cares. In that capacity he is himself a master, but still he is a servant; for

he has one over him. Let him be as proud as he pleases, he has little to be proud of, for the only rank he holds in life, is the rank of a servant. Now, the minister, and the Sunday-school teacher specially stand in the rank of servants. Why, we are none of us our own masters; we are not independent gentlemen, who may do as we please; our classes are not our own farms, which we may till in our own manner, and neglect if we please, out of which we may produce any harvest, or none at all, at our own discretion. No, we are nothing better than stewards, and we are to labour for our Master in heaven. What a strange thing it is to see a minister or a teacher giving himself fine airs, as if he were everybody in the world, and might do as he pleased. Is it not an anomaly? How is he to talk about the sacrifices that he makes, when he is spending only his master's property? How is he to boast about the time which he expends, when his time is not his own? It is all his Master's. He is a servant, and therefore, do he what he may, he only discharges the duty for which he is well rewarded. He has no reason to be proud, or to lord it over others, for whatever his power among them may be, he is himself neither more nor less than a servant. Let each of us try to recollect that henceforth "I am only a servant." If a superintendent puts a teacher to a class which she does not like, she will recollect that she is a *servant*. She does not allow her servants at home to stand up and say, they are not going to do scullery-work but will only wait at table; they are servants, and must do as they are bidden; and if we felt that we were servants, we should not object to do what we are told for Christ's sake: though we would not do it at the dictation of men, yet for Christ's sake we do it as unto the Lord. We do not suppose that our servants will come to us at night, and expect us to say to them, "You have done your work very well to-day;" we do not imagine that they will look for constant commendation. They are servants, and when they get their wages, that is their encomium on their work. They may judge they are worth their money, or else we should not keep them. When you do your work for Jesus, recollect you are only a servant. Do not expect always to have that encouragement, which some people are constantly crying after. If you get encouragement from your pastor, from other teachers, from your friends, be thankful; but if you do not get it, go on with your work notwithstanding. You are a servant, and when you receive your reward, that is of grace, and not of debt, then you will have the highest encomium that can be passed upon you, the plaudit of your Lord, and eternal glory with him whose you are, and whom you desire to serve.

But still while the steward is a servant, he is an *honourable one*. It does not do for the other servants in the house to tell him that he is a servant. He will not endure that: he knows it, and feels it; he desires to act and work as such, but at the same time, he is an honoured servant. Now, those who serve Christ in the office of teaching, are honourable men and women. I remember to have heard a very unseemly discussion between two persons, as to whether the minister was not superior to the Sabbath-school teacher. It reminded me of that talk of the disciples, as to who among them was the greatest. Why, we are all of us "the least," if we feel aright, and though we must each of us exalt our office as God hath given it to us, yet, I see not anywhere in the Bible, anything that should lead me to believe that the office of the preacher is more honourable than that of the teacher. It seems to me, that every Sunday-school teacher has a right to put "Reverend" before his name as much as I have, or if not, if he discharges his trust he certainly is a "Right Honourable." He teaches his congregation and preaches to his class. I may preach to more, and he to less, but still he is doing the same work, though in a smaller sphere. I am sure I can sympathise with Mr. Carey, when he said of his son Felix, who left the missionary work to become an ambassador, "Felix has driven into an ambassador," meaning to say, that he was once a great person as a missionary, but that he had afterwards accepted a comparatively insignificant office. So I think we may say of the Sabbath-school teacher, if he gives up his work because he cannot attend to it, on account of his enlarged business, he drives into a rich merchant. If he forsakes his teaching because he finds there is so much else to do, he drives into something less than he was before; with one exception, if he is obliged to give up to attend to his own family, and makes that family his Sabbath-school class, there is no driving there; he stands in the same position as he did before. I say they who teach, they who seek to pluck souls as brands from the burning, are to be considered as honoured persons, second far to him from whom they received their commission; but still in some sweet sense lifted up to become fellows with him, for

he calls them his brethren and his friends. "The servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends, for all things I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

Only one more thought here. The steward is also a servant *who has very great responsibility attached to his position*. A sense of responsibility seems to a right man always a weighty thing. To do a thing where there is no responsibility involved at all, is a very slight matter, and hence we find in ordinary affairs that the labour which involves no trust is but poorly paid. But where there is a large amount of trust reposed the labour is paid in proportion. Now the work of the Sabbath-school teacher is one of the most responsible in the world. It has sometimes staggered me to think how greatly God trusts you and me. You remember the story of the prodigal. It finds a counterpart in each of us, who after long wandering in sin have come home to Jesus. I sometimes think that a prudent father, when the prodigal was restored to his house, would receive him to his heart, would press him to his bosom, and give him a share of all his wealth, but would be very slow to trust him in any matter of responsibility. The next market-day the old gentlemen would say, "Now John I love you with all my heart, but you know you ran away once, and spent your living riotously; I must send your elder brother to market; I cannot trust you with my purse: I love you; I have totally forgiven you, at the same time I cannot yet rely upon you." Why does not God say so to us? Instead of that, when he takes poor prodigals to his heart, he trusts us with his most precious jewels, he trusts us with immortal souls. He permits us to be the means of seeking his lost sheep, and then allows us to feed the lambs after they are gathered. He puts the prodigal into the most important station, and hath confidence in him. Then my brethren and sisters, seeing he hath been gracious enough to repose confidence in such unworthy persons, shall we deceive him? Oh no; let us earnestly labour as stewards that every part of the estate committed to us shall be found in good order when our Master comes; that every jot and tittle of our account shall be found correct when he sums it up in the great day of the audit before his throne. Our office is a very, very solemn one. Some think little of it. Some take it upon themselves very lightly. Giddy youths are enticed into the school and not rendered more sober by their connection with it. Let such depart from us. We want none but those who are sober, none but those who solemnly weigh what they are doing, and who enter upon the work as a matter involving life or death; not as a trivial affair which concerns the interests of time, but an awfully solemn thing which even an angel would be incapable of performing, unless he had the abundant assistance of God the Holy Spirit. I have thus endeavoured very simply to set forth the idea couched in the word "stewardship." We are servants highly honoured, very responsible, and much trusted.

II. And now, THE ACCOUNT—"Give an account of thy stewardship." Let us briefly think of this giving an account of our stewardship.

Let us first notice that when we shall come to give an account of our stewardship before God, that account must be given in *personally*, by every one of us. While we are here, we talk in the mass; but when we come before God, we shall have to speak as individuals. You hear persons boasting about "*our* Sabbath-school." Many persons are wicked enough to call the Sabbath-school "*their* school," when they never see it by the year together. They say, "I hope *our* school is flourishing," when they never subscribe a halfpenny, when they never give the teachers a word of encouragement, or even a smile, and do not know how many children the school contains. Yet they call it theirs. Thieves that they are, taking to themselves that which does not belong to them! Well, but we, in our measure, make the same mistake. As a ministry, we often talk of the doings of the "*body*," and what wonders have been done by the "*denomination*." Now, let us recollect, when we come before God, there will be no judging us in denominations, no dealing with us in schools and in churches, but the account must be given for each one by himself. So, then, thou that hast the infant class, thou wilt have to give thine own account. It was but the other day thou wast finding fault with the conduct of the senior class, and thou wast told then to look at home. Conscience told thee so. But at last, when thou shalt have to stand before God, thou wilt have no account to give of the senior class, but of that infant class committed to thee. And you, my sister, you have been seven or eight years a teacher—you must give an account for yourself, not for that other teacher of another class, of

whom you have often boasted, because she has been the means of bringing six or seven children to Christ lately. Remember, her six won't be put with your none at all, in order to make the total at the year's end look respectable; but there will stand your great blank at the end of your labours, and there will remain the dark mark for your negligence, for your unpunctuality, your carelessness in your class, without the relief of the bright side of the diligent teacher's success. You must be judged each of you for yourself, not in parties, but one by one. This makes it terrible work, for a man to be looked at all alone. I have known people who could not bear to stand up in a pulpit; the very fact of so many eyes looking upon them seemed so horrible; but how will it be when we must stand up and hear our hearts read by the all-searching eye of God, and when the whole of our career in the offices which we now hold will be published before the sun, and that, I repeat it, without the salvo of the success of others, without any addition to our labours derived from the diligence of other teachers? Come, Mr. Steward, what is your account? Not that one, sir, not that one; *your account*. "Lord, I have brought in the account of the Sunday-school books." "No, not that; the account of *your own class*?" "Well, my Master, I have brought in the account of the class for the last twenty-five years, showing how many were converted." "No, not that; the account of *your own class while you were its teacher*." "Well, I have brought in the account of the class during the time I was teacher with So-and-so." "No, not that; the account of the class while you were the teacher of it *alone*; the account of how you taught, what you taught, how you prayed, how earnestly you laboured, how diligently you studied, and what you sought to do for Christ." Not the addenda of the other teacher who helped you in another part of the duty, but your own personal account alone must be brought in before God. "Give an account of *thy stewardship*." Putting it in this light, what account will some of you give in at the last and great day? Just let me stop a minute to charge your memories. What kind of account will it be? I trust a very large number here can humbly in their hearts say, "I have done but little, but I did *that* sincerely and prayerfully; may God accept it through Jesus Christ!" But I fear there are some others, who, if they are true to their consciences, will say, "I have done but little; I did that little carelessly; I did it without prayer; I did it without the help of the Holy Spirit." Then, my brother and sister, I hope you will add after that, "Oh, my God, forgive me, and help me from this good hour to be diligent in this divine business, fervent in my spirit, serving the Lord." And may God bless you in that prayer! Make no resolve, but offer a prayer which is better far; and may you be heard in heaven, the dwelling-place of God.

And note again, that while this account must be personal it must be *exact*. You will not, when you present your account before God, present the gross total, but every separate item. When thou givest in thine account of thy stewardship, it will be thus. Thou hadst so many children. What didst thou say to this child, and to this, and to this, and to the other? How often didst thou pray for that child with his bitter temper; for that child with his unbending obstinacy; for that child with its quickness, and its sweet affection; for that child, that sulky one; for that child, the headstrong, vicious one, that had learned all the evils of the street, and seemed to taint others? What didst thou do for each one of these? How didst thou labour for the conversion of every one? And to make the account still more particular, it will run thus—What didst thou do for each child on each Sabbath? Thou heardest one child utter an ill word: didst thou reprove it? Thou sawest another child oppress a little one: didst thou deliver the less out of his hand and reprove him, and teach both children to love each other? Didst thou notice the follies of each, and strive to understand the temperament of each, so that thou shouldst fit thy discourse or thy prayer to each? Didst thou travail in birth for the conversion of each one? Didst thou agonise in prayer with God, and then didst thou agonise in exhortation with them, beseeching them to be reconciled to Christ? I believe the account will be far more minute than this, when God shall come to try our hearts and reins as well as our works and ways. My poor way of putting it does but becloud the truth which I seek to bring forth, but nevertheless so shall it be; a special and exact account shall be given. And then there shall be an account given, for every opportunity; not only for every child, but for every opportunity of doing good to the child. Did you avail yourself of that afternoon, when the child was in a peculiarly solemn frame because his little brother lay at home dead? Did you seek to send the arrows home when providence had made

a wound in his little heart because he had lost his dear mother? Did you seek to turn every event which occurred in the school to account, whether it was joyous or the reverse? God gave you the opportunity, and he will at last ask you what you did with it. We shall many of us make but a sorry account, for we have neglected much that we ought to have done; and the general confession must be ours as teachers, "We have done those things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done."

And then remember, again, the account will be exact as to everything that we did. We shall not only be examined as to how we addressed the school; we may have had peculiar gifts for that, and we may have done well; it will be, "How did you address your own class?" and not that alone, but "How did you study the lessons?" If thou hadst no time it will not be required of thee to do what thou couldst not do; but if thou hadst much leisure how didst thou spend it? Was it for thy children, for thy Master's good, that thou mightest find polished shafts to shoot forth from thy bow, that God might bless thee, by giving thee strength to send them home into the heart? And then, what didst thou do in thy closet? Wast thou cold and careless there? Were thy children forgotten, or didst thou bring them on thy heart, and in thine arms, and with tears and cries commend them to Christ? Ah, Sunday-school teachers, your closet shall be turned into the open air one day, and the contents of your secret chambers be published before the sun. Oh, ye whose cobwebbed closets witness against you; oh, ye against whom the beam out of the wall exclaimeth because your voice has not been heard there, against whom the very floor might bear witness, because it hath never felt the weight of your knees, how will you stand this searching test? How will you endure this day of burning, when God shall try you for everything you did, and everything you did not do which you ought to have done, in connection with the work of teaching your children? The account must be exact and precise, as well as personal. I shall not stop to enlarge upon that; your own conscience and judgment can enlarge upon it at home.

Now, remember, once again, that the account must be *complete*. You will not be allowed to leave out something, you will not be allowed to add anything. Perhaps some of you would like to begin with to-morrow, or next Sabbath-day, and strike out the past. No, Sunday-school teacher, when God says, "Give an account of thy stewardship," you will have to begin with the day when you first were a teacher. Ah, my God, how many there are who profess to preach the Word, who might well beg that thou wouldest let many a year of their ministry be buried in forgetfulness! Ah, might not some of us fall upon our knees and say, "Lord, let me give account of my diligent years, not of my idle years?" But we must begin with our ordination, we must end with our death; and you must begin with the first hour when you sat down in your class, and you must end when life ends, and not till then. Does not this put a very solemn aspect upon your account, some of you? You are always saying, "I will be better to-morrow." Will that blot out yesterday? "I must be more diligent in future." Will that redeem the lost opportunities which have departed in the years gone by? No; if you have loitered long, and lingered much, you will find the hardest running of to-day will not make up for the loitering of yesterday. There have been some men who, after spending many years in sin, have been doubly diligent for Christ afterwards, but they have always felt that they have only done the day's work in the day, and they mourned over those years which the locusts had eaten, as gone beyond recall. Oh! catch the moments as they fly, Sabbath-school teachers; use the days as they come. Do not be talking about making up for the badness of the first part of the account by the brilliant character of the conclusion; you cannot do it, you must give an account for each day separately, for each year by itself; and do what you may to retrieve your losses, the losses still stand upon the book, and the Master will say, at last, "How came these here?" And, though they are all covered up in Sovereign grace, if thou believest in Christ Jesus, yet thou wouldest not wish to have any the more stains for that. Because Christ hath washed thee, thou dost not desire to make thyself filthy; because he hath atoned, thou dost not desire to commit sin. No, live, my brothers and sisters, as Sunday-school teachers should live. Live as if your own salvation depended upon the strictness of your fulfilling your duty; and yet recollect your salvation does not depend upon that, but on your personal interest in the everlasting covenant, and in the all-prevailing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Israel's strength and Redeemer.

III. And now, though there are many other things I might say, I fear lest I might weary you, therefore, let me notice some occasions when it will be well for you all to give an account of your stewardship; and then notice when you must give an account of it.

You know there is a proverb, that "short reckonings make long friends," and a very true proverb it is. A man will always be at friendship with his conscience as long as he makes short reckonings with it. It was a good rule of the old Puritans, that of making frank and full confession of sin every night; not to leave a week's sin to be confessed on Saturday night, or Sabbath morning, but to recall the failures, imperfections, and mistakes of the day, in order that we might learn from one day of failure how to achieve the victory on the morrow, and that washing ourselves daily from our sins we might preserve the purity and whiteness of our garments. Brothers and sisters, do the same; make short reckonings. And it will be well for you every Sabbath evening, or at any other time, if so it pleaseth you, to make a reckoning of what you do on the Sabbath. I do not say this in order that you may be encouraged in any self-righteous congratulation that you have done well; because, if you make your reckoning correct, you will never have much cause to congratulate yourself, but always cause to mourn that you did your duty so ill compared with what you ought to have done. When the Sabbath is over, and you have been twice to the house of God to teach your class, just sit down and try to recollect what were the points in which you failed. Perhaps you exhibited a hasty temper; you spoke to a boy too sharply when he was a little rebellious. Perhaps you were too complacent; you saw sin committed, and ought to have reproofed it, and you did not do so. If you find out your own failing, that is half the way to a cure. Next Sabbath you can try and set it right.

Then, there are times which Providence puts in your way, which will be excellent seasons for reckoning. For instance, every time a boy or girl leaves the school, there is an opportunity afforded you of thinking to yourselves, "Well, how did I deal with Betsy? How did I treat John? Did I give William such teaching as will help him in his future life, to maintain integrity in the midst of temptation, and preserve righteousness when he shall be subjected to imminent perils? How did I teach the girl? Did I so teach her that she will know her duty when she goes into the world? Did I strive with all my might to lead her to the foot of the cross?" There are many solemn questions which you may put concerning the child. And when you meet with any of them grown up in after years, you will find that a very proper season for giving an account of your stewardship to your conscience, by seeing whether you really did with that person, when a child, as you could have desired.

Then, there is a peculiar time for casting up accounts when a child dies. Ah! what a host of thoughts cluster around the dying-bed of a child whom we have taught. Next to the father and the mother, I should think the Sabbath-school teacher will take the most interest in the dying one. You will recollect, "There lies withering the flower which my hand hath watered; there is an immortal soul about to pass the portals of eternity, whom I have taught. O God, have I taught this dying child the truth, or have I deceived him! Have I dealt faithfully with him? Have I told him of his ruin? Have I set before him how he was fallen in Adam and depraved in himself? Have I told him about the great redemption of Christ? Have I shown him the necessity of regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit? or have I amused him with tales about the historical parts of the Bible, and pieces of morality, and kept back the weightier matters of the law? Can I put my hand into his dying hand, and silently lifting my heart to heaven, can I say, 'O God thou knowest I am clear of his blood?'" Ah! that is a thing that stings the minister often—when he recollects that any of his congregation are dying. When I stand sometimes by the dying-bed of any of the ungodly in my congregation, it brings many a fearful thought to me. Have I been as earnest as I ought to have been? Did I cry to this man, "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, stay not in all the plain, flee to the mountain? Did I pray for him, weep over him, tell him of his sin, preach Christ simply, plainly, boldly, to him? Was there not an occasion when I used lightness when I ought to have been solemn? Might there not have been a season when I uttered something by mistake, which may have been a pillow for the armhole of his conscience on which he might rest? Have not I helped to smooth his path to hell, instead of putting blocks in his way, and chains across his path that he might be turned out of it and led to seek the Saviour?" Ah! while we know that salvation is all of grace let none of us imagine

we are free from the blood of souls, unless we warn them with diligence, unless we preach with faithfulness; for this same Bible which tells me that Christ shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, tells me that if I warn them not, their blood, if they perish, shall be required at my hand.

But now, teacher, let me tell you an occasion when you *must* give in your account. You may put off all these seasons if you like; you may live as carelessly as you please, but if you have a particle of heart in you, you will have to give an account when you are sick, and cannot go to your class. If your conscience is worth having—which some people's consciences are not, for they are dead and seared—if your conscience is an awakened one, when you are put out of your work, you will begin to think how you did it. You should read the letters of that holy man Rutherford. If ever there was a man who preached the gospel sweetly and with divine unction, I should think it must have been he; and yet when he was shut up in Aberdeen, and could not get out to his much-loved flock, he began to say, "Ah, if the Lord will let me go out to preach again, I will never be such a dull drone as I was wont to be. I will preach with tears in mine eyes, so that the people may be comforted, and the sinners converted." Perhaps when you are lying ill in your bed-room, little Jane comes to see you, and says, "I hope you will soon get well, teacher;" or William, or Thomas calls and enquires about you every Sunday afternoon, and asks the servant to give his love to you, and hopes that teacher will soon come back again. Then is the time when I know you will be sure to cast up your account. You will say, "Ah, when I get back to my class, I won't teach them as I used to do; I will study my lesson more, I will pray more. I won't be so hot or so fast with them as I was wont to be. I will bear with their ill manners. Ah, if my Master will give me, like Hezekiah, another fifteen years of labour, and will give me more grace, I will strive to be better." You will be sure to cast up your accounts when you get sick.

But if you do not do it then, I will tell you when you must; that is when you come to die. What a dreadful thing it must be to be an unfaithful preacher on a dying-bed. (Oh that I may be saved from that!) To be upon one's bed when life is over; to have had great opportunities, mighty congregations, and to have been so diligent about something else as to have neglected to preach the full and free gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! methinks as I laid in my bed a-dying, I should see spectres and grim things in the room. One would come and stare upon me and say, "Ah! you are dying. Remember how many times I sat in the front of the gallery, and listened to you, but you never once told me to escape from the wrath to come; you were talking to me about something I did not understand; but the simple matter of the gospel you never preached to me, and I died in doubt and trembling. And now you are coming to me to the hell which I have inherited because you were unfaithful." And when in our grey and dying age we see the generations which have grown up around our pulpits, we shall think of them all. We shall think of the time when as striplings we first began to preach; we shall recollect the youths that then crowded, then the men, and then the grey heads that passed away. And methinks as they come on in grim procession, they will everyone leave a fresh curse upon our conscience because we were unfaithful. The death-bed of a man who has murdered his fellows, of some grim tyrant who has let the bloodhounds of war loose upon mankind, must be an awful thing. When the soldier, and the soldier's widow, and the murdered man of peace rise up before him; when the smoke of devastated countries seems to blow into his eyes and make them sore and red; when the blood of men hangs on his conscience like a great red pall; when bloody murder, the grim chamberlain, draws red curtains round his bed, and when he begins to approach the last end where the murderer must inherit his dreary doom, it must be a fearful time indeed. But, methinks to have murdered souls must be more awful still—to have distributed poison to children instead of bread, to have given them stones when they asked us for right food, to have taught them error when we ought to have taught them the truth as it is in Jesus, or to have spoken to them with cold listlessness when earnestness was needed. Oh, how your children seem to curse you, when you lie there and have been unfaithful to your charge. Yea, you will have to cast up your account then; and let me tell you, though your hope must all be fixed on Jesus, and that must be the consolation of your life and death, yet it will be very sweet to remember when you come to die, that you have been successful in winning souls to Christ. Ah! that will bring a little life into the cheek of the consumptive teacher, who sickens young when you remind her that there was a little girl who, a year

before she was taken ill, kissed her hand, and said, "Good bye, teacher, we shall meet in heaven. Do not you recollect, teacher, telling me the story of Jesus on the cross, and taking me home one Sunday afternoon, and putting your arms around my neck, and kneeling down and praying that God would bless me? Oh, my teacher, that brought me to Jesus." Yes, teacher, when you are lying on your bed, pale and consumptive, you will recollect that there is one up there beside your Saviour who will receive you into eternal habitations—that young spirit who has gone before you, who by your means was emancipated from the wickedness and bondage of sinful world. Happy is the teacher who has the hope of meeting a whole band of such in heaven. Such a thought often cheers me. Let the world say what it will, I know when I die there is many a spirit that will think of me in after years as the man who preached the gospel to him; many a drunkard brought to Jesus, and many a harlot reclaimed. And to the teacher it must be the same to think that when he claps his wings and mounts from this lower valley of earth to heaven, he will see a bright spirit coming down to meet him, and he will hear the Spirit saying—

"Sister spirit come away."

And when he opens his eyes, he will see that the song came from the lips of one to whom he had been blessed as the means of conversion. Happy you who shall be welcomed at the gates of Paradise by your spiritual sons and daughters, and who shall have beside your Master's welcome, the welcome of those whom he hath given you to be jewels in your crown of glory for ever and ever.

Now to conclude. We must all give an account to God in the day of judgment. That is the thing which makes death so terrible. Oh, Death, if thou wert all, what art thou but a pinch, and all is over! But after Death the judgment. This is the sting of the dragon to the ungodly. The last great day is come. The books are opened—men, women, and children are assembled. Many have come, and some on the right, and some on the left, have already heard the sentence. It is now your turn. Teacher! what account will you render? In the first place, are you in Christ yourself? or have you taught to others what you did not know yourself? Have I any such here? Doubtless, I have; for alas! there are many such in our schools. Oh, my friend, what wilt thou say when the Master, opening the book, shall ask thee, "What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes?" Will you look at him and say, "Lord I taught in thy schools, and thou hast eaten and drank in our streets." If you should say so, he will say, "Verily, I never knew you; depart from me ye cursed." Then, what have you to say with regard to your schools—for although our state at last will really be settled according to our interest in Christ, you will be *judged* by your works, as evidences. The Scripture always says that we are to be judged according to our works. Well, then, the book is opened. You hear your own name read, and you hear that one brief sentence—"Inasmuch as thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee a ruler over many things—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" Oh, heaven of heavens! and is this the reward of the little trouble of teaching a few children? Oh, Master, thou givest ingots of gold for our grains of dust—our fragments of service thou rewardest with crowns and kingdoms! But he turns to others, and to you he says, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me. Depart from me into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Which of these two shall be said to me? Which of these two shall be said to you? Oh! as in God's sight I charge you by him who is the Judge of quick and dead, by the swiftness of his chariot-wheels which now are bringing him here, by the solemnity of his awful tribunal, by that sentence which shall never be reversed, judge yourselves, for then ye shall not be judged. Give an account of your stewardship to your conscience, and to your God. Confess your sins, seek his help, and begin from this hour, by his Holy Spirit, to undertake his work afresh; so shall ye stand before his face, clothed in the righteousness of your Redeemer and washed in his blood. Though not boasting in your works you shall be able to stand accepted in him, and your works shall follow when you rise from your labours, and you shall be among the blessed that die in the Lord.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 9, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"Those that have turned the world upside down are come hither also."—Acts xvii. 6.

THIS is just an old version of an oft-repeated story. When disturbances arise in a state, and rebellions and mutinies cause blood to be shed, it is still the custom to cry, "The Christians have done this." In the days of Jesus we know that it was laid to the charge of our blessed and divine Master, that he was a stirrer of sedition, whereas he himself had refused to be a king, when his followers would have taken him by force to make him one, for he said, "My kingdom is not of this world;" yet was he crucified under the two false charges of sedition and blasphemy. The same thing occurred with the Apostles. Wherever they went to preach the gospel, the Jews who opposed them sought to stir up the refuse of the city to put an end to their ministry; and then, when a great tumult had been made by the Jews themselves, who had taken unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring him out to the people, then the Jews laid the tumult and the uproar at the door of the Apostles, saying, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." This plan was followed all through the Roman empire, until Christianity became the state religion. There was never a calamity befel Rome, never a war arose, never a famine or a plague, but the vulgar multitude cried, "The Christians to the lions! The Christians have done this." Nero himself imputed the burning of Rome, of which he himself doubtless was the incendiary, to the Christians. The believers in Jesus were slandered as if they were the common sewer, into which all the filth of sin was to be poured; whereas, they were like Solomon's great brazen sea, which was full of the purest water, wherein even priests themselves might wash their robes. And you will remark, that to this day the world still lays its ills at the door of the Christians. Was it not the foolish cry a few months ago, and are there not some weak-minded individuals who still believe it, that the great massacre and mutiny in India was caused by the missionaries. Forsooth, the men who turned the world upside down had gone there also; and because men broke through all the restraints of nature and of law, and committed deeds for which fiends might blush, this must be laid at the door of Christ's holy gospel, and the men of peace must bear on their shoulders the blame of war! Ah! we need not refute this; the calumny is too idle to need a refutation. Can it be true, that he whose gospel is love should be the fomentor of disturbance? Can it be fair for a moment to lay mutiny and rebellion at the door of the gospel, the very motto of which is, "Peace on earth, good will towards men?" Did not our Master say, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's?" Did he not himself pay tribute, though he sent to the fish of the sea, to get the shekel? And have not his followers at all times been a peaceful generation?—save only and except where the liberty of their conscience was touched, and then they were not the men to bow their knees to tyrants and kings, but with brave old Oliver they did bind their kings in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron, as they will do again, if their liberty ever should be infringed, so that they should not have power to worship God as they ought,

We believe that what these Jews said of the Apostles, was just a downright wilful lie. They knew better. The Apostles were not the disturbers of states. It is true, they preached that which would disturb the sinful constitution of a kingdom, and which would disturb the evil practices of false priests; but they never meant to set men in an uproar. They did come to set men at arms with sin; they did draw the sword against iniquity; but against men as men, against kings as kings, they had no battle; it is with iniquity and sin, and wrong everywhere, that they proclaimed an everlasting warfare. But still, brethren, there is many a true word spoken in jest, we say, and surely there is many a true word spoken in malice. They said the Apostles turned the world upside down. They meant by that, that they were disturbers of the peace. But they said a great true thing; for Christ's gospel does turn the world upside down. It was the wrong way upwards before, and now that the gospel is preached, and when it shall prevail, it will just set the world right by turning it upside down.

And now I shall try to show how, in the *world at large*, Christ's gospel turns the world upside down; and then I shall endeavour, as well as God shall help me, to show how the *little world that is within every man* is turned upside down, when he becomes a believer in the gospel of Christ.

I. First, then, the gospel of Christ turns the world upside down, WITH REGARD TO THE POSITION OF DIFFERENT CLASSES OF MEN.

In the esteem of men, the kingdom of heaven is something like this. High there on the summit, there sits the most grand rabbi, the right venerable, estimable and excellent doctor of divinity, the great philosopher, the highly learned, the deeply instructed, the immensely intellectual man. He sits on the apex: he is the highest, because he is the wisest. And just below him there is a class of men who are deeply studied—not quite so skilled as the former, but still exceeding wise,—who look down at those who stand at the basement of the pyramid, and who say to them, "Ah, they are the ignoble multitude, they know nothing at all." A little lower down, we come to the sober, respectable, thinking men, not those who set up for teachers, but those who seldom will be taught, because they already in their own opinion know all that is to be learned. Then after them there come a still larger number of very estimable folks, who are exceeding wise in worldly wisdom, although not quite so exalted as the philosopher and the rabbi. Lower still come those who have just a respectable amount of wisdom and knowledge; and then at the very basement there come the fool, and the little child, and the babe. When we look at these we say, "This is the wisdom of this world. Behold how great a difference there is between the babe at the bottom, and the learned doctor on the summit! How wide the distinction between the ignorant simpleton who forms the hard, rocky, stubborn basement, and the wise man of polished marble, who there stands resplendant at the apex of the pyramid." Now, just see how Christ turns the world upside down. There it stands. He just reverses it. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty men are chosen; but God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom." It is just turning the whole social fabric upside down; and the wise man finds now that he has to go upstairs towards his simplicity. He has been all his life trying as far as he could, to get away from the simplicity of the credulous child; he has been thinking, and judging, and weighing, and bringing his logic to cut up every truth he heard, and now he has to begin, and go up again: he has to become a little child, and turn back to his former simplicity. This is the world turned upside down, with a vengeance; and therefore the wise seldom love it.

If you wish to see the world turned upside down to perfection, just turn to the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew: here you have a whole summary of the world reversed. Jesus Christ turned the world upside down the first sermon he preached. Look at the third verse. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" Now, we like a man who has an ambitious spirit—a man who, as we say, knows how to push his way in the world—who looks up—is not contented with the position that he occupies, but is always for climbing higher and higher. And we have a very fair opinion too of a man, who has a very fair opinion of himself—a man who is not going to bow and cringe. He will have his rights, that he will; he will not give way to anybody. He believes himself to be somewhat, and he will stand on his own belief, and will prove it to the world yet. He is not one of your poor, mean-spirited fellows, who are content with poverty, and sit still. He will not be contented. Now such a man as this the

world admires. But Christ just turns that upside down, and says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven." The men who have no strength of their own, but look for all to Christ—the men who have no spirit to run with a wicked world, but who would rather suffer an injury than resent one—the men who are lowly and of a humble carriage, who seek not to lift their heads above their fellows; who if they be great have greatness thrust upon them, but never seek it—who are content along the cool, sequestered vale of life, to keep the even tenour of their way—who seem to have always ringing in their ears, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not"—"the poor in spirit," happy in their poverty, who are content with the Lord's providence, and think themselves far more rich than they deserve to be. Now, these men Christ says, are blessed. The world says, they are soft, they are fools; but Christ puts those on the top whom the world puts at the bottom. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven."

Then there is another lot of people in the world; they are always mourning. They do not let you see it often, for their Master has told them when they fast, to anoint their face, that they appear not unto men to fast; but still secretly before God they have to groan; they hang their harps upon the willows; they mourn for their own sin, and then they mourn for the sin of the times. The world says of these, "They are a moping, melancholy set; I would not care to belong to their number;" and the gay reveller comes in, and he almost spits upon them in his scorn. For what are they? They love the darkness. They are the willows of the stream; but this man, like the proud poplar, lifts his head, and is swayed to and fro in the wind of his joy, boasting of his greatness, and his freedom. Hear how the gay youth talks to his mourning friend, who is under conviction of sin. "Ah! yours is a morbid disposition; I pity you; you ought to be under the hand of a physician. You go mourning through this world. What a miserable thing, to be plunging through waves of tribulation! What a dismal case is yours! I would not stand in your shoes and be in your position for all the world." No, but Christ turns the world upside down; and so those people whom you think to be mournful and sorrowful, are the very ones who are to rejoice. For read the fourth verse, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." Yes, worldling, your joy is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. It blazeth a little, and maketh a great noise: it is soon done with. But "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." You cannot see the light now, because it is sown. It lies under the clods of poverty, and shame, and persecution, mayhap. But when the great harvest day shall come, the blades of light, upstarting at the second coming, shall bring forth "the full corn in the ear" of bliss and glory everlasting. O ye mourning souls, be glad; for whereas the world puts you beneath it, Christ puts you above the world's head. When he turns the world upside down, he says you *shall* be comforted.

Then there is another race of people, called "*the meek*." You may have met with them now and then. Let me describe the opposite. I know a man who never feels happy unless he has a law-suit; he would never pay a bill unless he had a writ about it. He is fond of law. The idea of pulling another up before the court is a great delicacy to him. A slight affront he would not easily forget. He has a very large amount of mock dignity; and if he be never so slightly touched, if a harsh word be spoken against him, or one slander uttered, he is down upon his enemy at once; for he is a man of a hard temper, and he casts the debtor into prison, and verily I say unto thee, if thou gettest in there by his writ, thou shalt never come out until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. Now the meek are of a very different disposition. You may revile them, but they will not revile again; you may injure them, but they know that their Master has said, "I say unto thee, resist not evil." They do not put themselves into airs and passions on a slight affront, for they know that all men are imperfect, and therefore they think that perhaps their brother made a mistake, and did not wish to hurt their feelings; and therefore they say, "Well, if he did not wish to do it, then I will not be hurt by it; I dare say he meant well, and therefore I will take the will for the deed; and though he spoke harshly, yet he will be sorry for it to-morrow; I will not mention it to him,—I will put up with whatever he chooses to say." There is a slander uttered against him: he says, "Well, let it alone; it will die of itself; where no wood is, the fire goeth out." Another speaketh exceeding ill against him in his hearing; but he just holds his tongue; he is dumb and openeth not his mouth. He is not like the sons of Zeruiah, who said to David, "Let us go and

take off that dead dog's head, because he cursed the king." He says, "No, if the Lord hath bidden him curse; let him curse." "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." He is quite content to bear and forbear, and put up with a thousand injuries, rather than inflict one; meekly and quietly he goes his way through the world, and people say, "Ah! such a man as that will never get on; he will always be taken in. Why, he will be lending money, and will never get it back again; he will be giving his substance to the poor, and he will never receive it. How stupid he is! He allows people to infringe on his rights; he has no strength of mind; he does not know how to stand up for himself, fool that he is." Ay, but Christ turns it upside down, and he says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Is not that provoking to you graspers, you high spirited people, you lawyers, you that are always trying to bring your neighbour into trouble touching your rights? you do it in order that you may inherit the earth: see how Christ spites you, and treads your wisdom under feet. He says, "*The meek shall inherit the earth.*" After all, very often, the best way to get our rights is to let them alone. I am quite certain that the safest way to defend your character is never to say a word about it. If every person in this place chooses to slander me, and utter the most furious libels that he pleases, he may rest quite assured he will never have a law-suit from me. I am not quite fool enough for that. I have always noticed that when a man defends himself in a court of law against any slander, he just does his enemy's business with his own hand. Our enemies cannot hurt us, unless we hurt ourselves. No man's character was ever really injured except by himself. Be you among the meek, and you shall inherit the earth. Bear all things, hope all things, believe all things, and it shall be the best, even on this earth, in the end.

Do you see that very respectable gentleman yonder, who has never omitted to attend his church or his chapel twice every Sunday ever since he became a man. He reads his Bible too, and he has family prayers. It is true that there are certain stories flying about, that he is rather hard upon his labourers, and exacting at times in his payments; but does justice to all men, although no further will he go. This man is on very good terms with himself; when he gets up in the morning he always shakes hands with himself, and compliments himself on being a very excellent person. He generally lives in a front street, in his opinion, and the first number in the street, too. If you speak to him about his state before God, he says, that if he does not go to heaven nobody will; for he pays twenty shillings in the pound to everybody; he is strictly upright, and there is no one who can find any fault with his character. Isn't he a good man? Don't you envy him?—a man who has so excellent an opinion of himself that he thinks himself perfect; or if he is not quite perfect, yet he is so good that he believes that with a little help, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Well, now, do you see standing at the back of the church there, a poor woman with tears running down her eyes? Come forward, ma'am; let us hear your history. She is afraid to come forward; she dares not speak in the presence of respectable persons; but we gather thus much from her: She has lately found out that she is full of sin, and she desires to know what she must do to be saved. Ask her. She tells you she has no merits of her own. Her song is, "I the chief of sinners am. Oh! that mercy would save me!" She never compliments herself upon her good works, for she says she has none; all her righteousnesses are as filthy rags; she puts her mouth in the very dust when she prays, and she dares not lift so much as her eyes towards heaven. You pity that poor woman. You would not like to be in her case. The other man whom I have just mentioned, stands at the very top of the ladder, does he not? But this poor woman stands at the bottom. Now just see the gospel process—the world turned upside down. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled;" while the man who is content with himself has this for his portion—"As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse;" publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before you, because you seek not the righteousness which is of faith, but you seek it as it were by the works of the law. So here you see again is the world turned upside down in the first sermon Christ ever preached.

Now turn to the next beatitude—in the seventh verse—"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." Of this I have already spoken. The merciful are not much respected in this world—at least if they are imprudently merciful; the man who forgives too much, or who is too generous, is not considered to be wise. But Christ declares that he who has been merciful—merciful to supply the wants of the

poor, merciful to forgive his enemies and to pass by offences, shall obtain mercy. Here, again, is the world turned upside down.

"Blessed are the *pure in heart*: for they shall see God." The world says, "Blessed is the man who indulges in a gay life." If you ask the common run of mankind who is the happy man, they will tell you, "The happy man is he who has abundance of money, and spends it freely, and is freed from restraint—who leads a merry dance of life, who drinks deep of the cup of intoxication—who revels riotously—who, like the wild horse of the prairie, is not bitted by order, or restrained by reason, but who dashes across the broad plains of sin, unharnessed, unguided, unrestrained." This is the man whom the world calls happy: the proud man, the mighty man, the Nimrod, the man who can do just as he wishes, and who spurns to keep the narrow way of holiness. Now, the Scripture says, Not so; "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

"Blest is the man who shuns the place
Where sinners love to meet;
Who fears to tread their wicked ways,
And hates the scoffer's seat,"—

the man who cannot touch one thing because that would be lascivious, nor another because that would spoil his communion with his Master; a man who cannot frequent this place of amusement, because he could not pray there, and cannot go to another, because he could not hope to have his Master's sanction upon an hour so spent. That man, pure in heart, is said to be a Puritanical moralist, a strict Sabatarian, a man who has not any mind of his own; but Jesus Christ puts all straight, for he says, these are the blessed men, these are the happy ones. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

And now look at the ninth verse. What a turning of the world upside down that is! You walk through London, and who are the men that we put upon our columns and pillars, and upon our park gates, and so on? Read the ninth verse, and see how that turns the world upside down. There upon the very top of the world, high, high up, can be seen the armless sleeve of a Nelson: there he stands, high exalted above his fellows; and there, in another place, with a long file up his back, stands a duke; and in another place, riding upon a war horse, is a mighty man of war. These are the world's blest heroes. Go into the capital of what empire you choose to select, and you shall see that the blessed men, who are put upon pedestals, and who have statues erected to their memory, who are put into our St. Paul's Cathedral, and our Westminster Abbey, are not exactly the men mentioned in the ninth verse. Let us read it. "Blessed are the *peace-makers*; for they shall be called the children of God." Ah! but you do not often bless the peace-makers, do you? The man who comes between two belligerents, and bears the stroke himself—the man who will lie down on the earth, and plead with others that they would cease from warfare—these are the blessed. How rarely are they set on high. They are generally set aside, as people who cannot be blessed, even though it seem that they try to make others so. Here is the world turned upside down. The warrior with his garment stained in blood, is put into the ignoble earth, to die and rot; but the peace-maker is lifted up, and God's crown of blessing is put round about his head, and men one day shall see it, and struck with admiration they shall lament their own folly, that they exalted the blood-red sword of the warrior, but that they did rend the modest mantle of the man who did make peace among mankind.

And to conclude our Saviour's sermon, notice once more, that we find in this world a race of persons who have always been hated—a class of men who have been hunted like the wild goat; persecuted, afflicted, and tormented. As an old divine says, "The Christian has been looked upon as if he had a wolf's head, for as the wolf was hunted for his head everywhere, so has the Christian been hunted to the uttermost ends of the earth." And in reading history we are apt to say, "These persecuted persons occupy the lowest room of blessedness; these who have been sawn asunder, who have been burned, who have seen their houses destroyed, and have been driven as houseless exiles into every part of the earth—these men who have wandered about in sheep's skins, and goat's skins,—these are the very least of mankind." Not so. The gospel reverses all this, and it says, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for *righteousness' sake*, for their's is the kingdom of heaven." I repeat it: The whole of these beatitudes are just in conflict

with the world's opinion; and we may quote the words of the Jew, and say, "Jesus Christ was 'the man who turned the world upside down.'"

And now I find I must be very brief, for I have taken so much time in endeavouring to show how Christ's gospel turned the world upside down, in the position of its characters, that I shall have no space left for anything else. But will you have patience with me, and I will briefly pass through the other points?

I have next to remark, that the Christian religion turns the world upside down in its *maxims*. I will just quote a few texts which show this very clearly. "It was said by them of old time, eye for eye and tooth for tooth; but I say unto you, resist not evil." It has generally been held by each of us, that we are not to allow anyone to infringe upon our rights; but the Saviour says, "Whosoever would sue thee at the law and take thy cloak, let him take thy coat also." "If any man smite thee on the one cheek, turn unto him the other also." If these precepts were kept, would it not turn the world upside down? "It has been said by them of old time, love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy;" but Jesus Christ said, "Let love be unto all men." He commands us to love our enemies, and to pray for them who spitefully use us. He says, "If thine enemy hunger feed him, and if he thirst give him drink, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." This would indeed be turning the world upside down; for what would become of our war ships and our warriors, if at the port-holes where now we put our cannons, we should have sent out to some burning city of our enemies—for instance, to burning Sebastopol,—if we had sent to the houseless inhabitants, who had been driven from their homes, barrels of beef, and bundles of bread and clothes, to supply their wants. That would have been a reversal of all human policy; but yet it would have been just the carrying out of Christ's law, after all. So shall it be in the days that are to come, our enemies shall be loved, and our foemen shall be fed. We are told too, in these times, that it is good to a man to heap unto himself abundant wealth, and make himself rich; but Jesus Christ turned the world upside down, for he said, there was a certain rich man who was clothed in scarlet, and fared sumptuously every day, and so on, and his fields brought forth abundantly; and he said, "I will pull down my barns, and build greater;" but the Lord says, "Thou fool!" That is reversing everything in this world. You would have made an Alderman of him, or a Lord Mayor; and fathers would have patted their boys on the head, and said, "That is all through his frugality and taking care; see how he has got on in the world; when he had got a good crop, he did not give it away to the poor, as that extravagant man does who has kept on working all his life, and never be able to retire from business; he saved it all up;—be as good a boy as So-and-so, and get on too." But Christ said, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." A turning of everything upside down. And others of us will have it, that we ought to be very careful every day, and always looking forward to the future, and always fretting about what is to be. Here is a turning of the world upside down, when Jesus Christ says, "Remember the ravens; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them, are ye not better than they?" I do believe that at this day the maxims of business are clean opposed to the maxims of Christ. But I shall be answered by this, "Business is business." Yes, I know business is business; but business has no business to be such business as it is. Oh! that it might be altered, till every man could make his business his religion, and make a religion of his business.

I have not detained you long upon that point; and therefore I am free to mention a third. How Christ has turned the world upside down, as to our *religious notions*. Why, the mass of mankind believe, that if any man wills to be saved, that is all which is necessary. Many of our preachers do in effect preach this worldly maxim. They tell men that they must make themselves willing. Now, just hear how the gospel upsets that. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." The world will have an universal religion too; but how Christ overturns that. "I pray for them; I pray not for the world." He hath ordained us *from among* men. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." "The Lord knoweth them that are his." How that runs counter to all the world's opinion of religion! The world's religion is this—"Do, and thou shalt live;" Christ's religion is—"Believe and live." We will have it, that if a man be righteous, sober, upright, he shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but Christ says—This thou oughtest to have done; but still, not this can ever cleanse thee. "As many as are under the works of the

law are under the curse." "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." "Believe and live," is just the upsetting of every human notion. Cast thyself on Christ: trust in him. Have good works afterwards; but first of all trust in him that died upon the tree. This is the overturning of every opinion of man. And hence mortals will always fight against it, so long as the human heart is what it is. Oh! that we knew the gospel! Oh! that we felt the gospel! For it would be the upsetting of all self-righteousness, and the casting down of every high look, and of every proud thing.

II. And now, beloved, spare me a little time, while I try to show THAT WHICH IS TRUE IN THE WORLD, IS TRUE IN THE HEART. Instead, however, of enlarging at full length upon the different topics, I shall make my last point the subject of examination.

Man is a little world, and what God does in the outer world, he does in the inner. If any of you would be saved, your hearts must be turned upside down. I will now appeal to you, and ask you whether you have ever felt this—whether you know the meaning of it?

In the first place, your *judgment* must be turned upside down. Cannot many of you say, that which you now believe to be the truth of God is very far opposed to your former carnal notions? Why, if anyone had told you, that you should be a believer in the distinguishing doctrines of free and sovereign grace, you would have laughed him in the face. "What! I believe the doctrine of election? What! I ever hold the doctrine of particular redemption, or final perseverance? Pshaw! nonsense! It cannot be!" But now you do hold it, and the thing which you thought unreasonable and unjust, now seems to you to be for God's glory, and for man's eternal benefit. You can kiss the doctrine which once you despised, and you meekly receive it as sweeter than the droppings of honey from the honeycomb, though once you thought it to be as the very poison of asps, and gall, and wormwood. Yes, when grace enters the heart, there is a turning upside down of all our opinions; and the great truth of Jesus sits reigning on our soul.

Is there not, again, a total change of all your *hopes*? Why, your hopes used to be all for this world. If you could but get rich, if you could but be great and honoured, you would be happy! You looked forward to it. All you were expecting was a paradise this side the flood. And now where are your hopes?—not on earth; for where your treasure is, there must your heart be also. You are looking for a city that hands have not piled; your desires are heavenly, whereas they were gross and carnal once. Can ye say that? Oh! all ye members of this congregation, can ye say that your hopes and your desires are changed? Are ye looking upward, instead of downward? Are you looking to serve God on earth, and to enjoy him for ever? Or are you still content with thinking "What ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed?"

Again, it is a complete upsetting of all your *pleasures*. You loved the tavern once; you hate it now. You hated God's house once; it is now your much-loved habitation. The song, the Sunday newspaper, the lewd novel—all these were sweet to your taste; but you have burned the books that once enchanted you, and now the dusty Bible from the back of the shelf is taken down, and there it lies, wide open, upon the family table, and it is read both morn and night, much loved, much prized and delighted in. The Sabbath was once the dullest day of the week to you; you either loitered outside the door in your shirt-sleeves, if you were poor, or if you were rich you spent the day in your drawing-room, and had company in the evening: now, instead thereof, your company you find in the church of the living God, and you make the Lord's house the drawing-room where you entertain your friends. Your feast is no longer a banquet of wine, but a banquet of communion with Christ. There are some of you who once loved nothing better than the theatre, the low concert room, or the casino: over such places you now see a great black mark of the curse, and you never go there. You seek now the prayer meeting, the church meeting, the gathering of the righteous, the habitation of the Lord God of hosts.

It is marvellous how great a change the gospel makes in a man's *house* too. Why, it turns his house upside down. Look over the mantle-piece—There is a vile daub of a picture there, or a wretched print, and the subject is worse than the style of the thing. But when the man follows Jesus he takes that down, and he gets a print of John Bunyan in his prison, or his wife standing before the magistrate, or a print of the apostle Paul preaching at Athens, or some good old subject representing something Biblical. There is a pack of cards and a cribbage

board in the cupboard; he turns them out, and instead he puts there perhaps the monthly magazine, or mayhap a few works of old divines, just here and there one of the publications of the Religious Tract Society, or a volume of a Commentary. Every thing is upside down there. The children say, "Father is so altered." They never knew such a thing. He used to come home sometimes drunk of a night, and the children used to run up stairs and be in bed before he came in; and now little John and little Sarah sit at the window and watch till he comes home; and they go toddling down the street to meet him, and he takes one in his arms, and the other by the hand, and brings them home with him. He used to teach them to sing "Begone, dull care," or something worse; now he tells them of "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," or puts into their mouth some sweet song of old. A jolly set of companions he used to have come to see him, and a roaring party there used to be of them, on a Sunday afternoon; but that is all done with. The mother smiles upon her husband: she is a happy woman now; she knows that he will no longer disgrace himself by plunging into the vilest of society, and being seduced into the worst of sins. Now, if you could take a man's heart out, and put a new heart right into him, it would not be half so good, if it were another natural heart, as the change that God works, when he takes out the heart of stone, and puts in a heart of flesh—

"A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
Our dear Redeemer's throne,
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone."

I put, then, the question to you again: Have you been turned upside down? How about your companions? You loved those the best who could swear the loudest, talk the fastest, and tell the greatest falsehoods: now you love those who can pray the most earnestly, and tell you the most of Jesus. Everything is changed with you. If you were to meet your old self going down the street, you would not know him, except by hearsay; you are no relation to him at all. Sometimes the old gentleman comes to your house, and he begins to tempt you to go back; but you turn him out of doors as soon as you can, and say, "Begone! I never got on so long as I knew you; I had a ragged coat to my back then, and I was always giving the publican all my money; I never went to God's house, but cursed my Maker, and added sin to sin, and tied a mill-stone round my neck. So away from me; I will have nothing to do with you; I have been buried with Christ, and I have risen with him. I am a new man in Christ Jesus, old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new."

I have some here, however, who belong to a different class of society, who could not indulge in any of these things; but ah! ladies and gentlemen, if you are ever converted, you must have as great a sweeping out as the poorest man that ever lived. There must be as true a turning upside down in the salvation of an earl, or a duke, or a lord, as in the salvation of a pauper or a peasant. There is as much sin in the higher ranks as in the lower, and sometimes more, because they have more light, more knowledge, more influence, and when they sin, they not only damn themselves, but others too. O you that are rich, have you had a change too? Have the frivolities of this world become sickening things to you? Do you turn away with loathing from the common cant and conventionalism of high life? Have you forsaken it? and can you now say, "Although I am in the world, yet am I not of it; its pomps and vanities I do eschew; its pride and its glory I trample under feet; these are nothing to me; I would follow my Master bearing his cross, through evil report and through good report?" If such be not the case, if you are not changed, remember, there are no exceptions; one truth is true for all—"Except ye be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of heaven." And that amounts in substance to my text: except ye be thoroughly renewed, turned upside down, ye cannot be saved. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" for he that believeth shall be sanctified and renewed—shall be saved at last—but he that believeth not must be cast away in the great day of God's account.

The Lord bless you; for Jesus' sake!

The New Park Street Pulpit.

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 16, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin."—John xv. 22.

THE peculiar sin of the Jews, the sin which aggravated above everything their former iniquities, was their rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. He had been very plainly described in the books of the prophets, and they who waited for him, such as Simeon and Anna, no sooner beheld him, even in his infant state, than they rejoiced to see him, and understood that God had sent forth his salvation. But because Jesus Christ did not answer the expectation of that evil generation, because he did not come arrayed in pomp and clothed with power, because he had not the outward garnishing of a prince and the honours of a king, they shut their eyes against him; he was "a root out of a dry ground," he was "despised and they esteemed him not." Nor did their sin stop there. Not content with denying his Messiahship, they were exceeding hot against him in their anger; they hunted him all his life, seeking his blood; nor were they content till their fiendish malice had been fully glutted by sitting down at the foot of the cross, and watching the dying throes and the expiring agonies of their crucified Messiah. Though over the cross itself the words were written, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," yet they knew not their king, God's everlasting Son; and knowing him not, they crucified him, "for had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Now, the sin of the Jews is every day repeated by the Gentiles; that which they did once, many have done every day. Are there not many of you now present this day, listening to my voice, who forget the Messiah? You do not trouble yourself to deny him; you would not degrade yourselves, in what is called a Christian country, by standing up to blaspheme his name. Perhaps you hold the right doctrine concerning him, and believe him to be the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary; but still you neglect his claims, and give him no honour, and do not accept him as worthy of your trust. He is not your Redeemer; you are not looking for his second advent, nor are you expecting to be saved through his blood; nay, even worse, ye are this day crucifying him; for know ye not, that as many as put away from them the gospel of Christ, do crucify the Lord afresh and open wide his wounds? As often as ye hear the Word preached and reject it, as often as ye are warned, and stifle the voice of your conscience, as often as ye are made to tremble, and yet say, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season, I will send for thee," so often do you in effect grasp the hammer and the nail, and once more pierce the hand, and make the blood issue from the side. And there are other ways by which you wound him through his members. As often as ye despise his ministers, or cast stumbling blocks in the way of his servants, or impede his gospel by your evil example, or by your hard words seek to pervert the seeker from the way of truth, so often do you commit that great iniquity which brought the curse upon the Jew, and which hath doomed him to wander through the earth, until the day of the second advent, when he shall come, who

shall even by the Jew be acknowledged the King of the Jews, for whom both Jew and Gentile are now looking with anxious expectation, even Messias, the Prince who came once to suffer, but who comes again to reign.

And now I shall endeavour this morning to show the parallel between your case and that of the Jew; not doing so in set phrase, but yet incidentally, as God shall help me; appealing to your conscience, and making you feel that in rejecting Christ, you commit the same sin and incur the same doom. We shall note, first of all, *the excellence of the ministry, since Christ comes in it, and speaks to men*: "If I had not spoken to them." We shall notice, secondly, *the aggravation of sin caused by the rejection of Christ's message*: "If I had not spoken to them they had not had sin." Thirdly, *the death of all excuses, caused by the preaching of the Word*: "Now they have no cloke for their sin." And then, in the last place, we shall briefly, but very solemnly announce *the fearfully aggravated doom of those who thus reject the Saviour, and increase their guilt by despising him*.

I. In the first place, then, this morning it is ours to say, and to say truly too, that in the preaching of the Gospel, there is to man's conscience the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the speaking of the Saviour through us. When Israel of old despised Moses and murmured against him, Moses meekly said, "Ye have not murmured against us, but ye have murmured against the Lord God of Israel." And truly the minister may, with Scripture warrant, say the same: he that despiseth us, despiseth not us, but him that sent us; he who rejecteth the message rejecteth not what we say, but rejecteth the message of the everlasting God. The minister is but a man; he has no priestly power, but he is a man called out of the rest of mankind, and endowed with the Holy Spirit, to speak to his fellow-men; and when he preacheth the truth as with power sent down from heaven, God owns him by calling him his ambassador, and puts him in the high and responsible position of a watchman on the walls of Zion, and he bids all men take heed that a faithful message, faithfully delivered, when despised and trampled on, amounts to rebellion against God, and to sin and iniquity against the Most High. As for what I may say, as a man, it is but little that I should say it; but if I speak as the Lord's ambassador, take heed that ye alight not the message. It is the Word of God sent down from heaven which we preach with the power of the Holy Spirit, earnestly beseeching you to believe it, and remember, it is at the peril of your own souls that you put it from you, for it is not we that speak, but the Spirit of the Lord our God who speaketh in us. With what a solemnity does this invest the gospel ministry! O ye sons of men, the ministry is not the speaking of men, but the speaking of God through men. As many as are the real called and sent servants of God, are not the authors of their message; but they first hear it from the Master, and they speak it to the people; and they see ever before their eyes these solemn words—"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee;" and they hear behind them this awful threatening—"If thou warn them not they shall perish, but their blood will I require at thine hand." Oh! that ye might see written in letters of fire before you this day the words of the prophet—"O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord;" for as far as our ministry is true and untainted by error, it is God's Word, and it hath the same right and claim to your belief as if God himself should speak it from the top of Sinai, instead of speaking it through the humble ministry of the Word of God.

And now let us pause over this doctrine, and let us ask ourselves this solemn question. Have we not all of us grossly sinned against God, in the neglect that we have often put upon the means of grace? How often have you stayed away from the house of God, when God himself was speaking there? What would have been the doom of Israel, if, when summoned on that sacred day to hear the Word of God from the top of the mountain, they had perversely rambled into the wilderness, rather than attend to hear it? And yet so have you done. You have sought your own pleasure, and listened to the siren song of temptation; but ye have shut your ear against the voice of the Most High; and when he has himself been speaking in his own house, ye have turned aside unto crooked ways, and have not regarded the voice of the Lord your God. And when ye have come up to the house of God, how often has there been the careless eye, the inattentive ear! Ye have heard as though ye heard not. Your ear has been penetrated, but the hidden man of the heart has been deaf, and you have been like the deaf adder;

charm we never so wisely, you would not listen nor regard us. God himself has spoken, too, at times in your conscience, so that you have heard it. You have stood in the aisle, and your knees have knocked together, you have sat in your pew, and while some mighty Boanerges has thundered out the word, you have heard it said, as with an angel's voice, "*Prepare to meet thy God—consider thy ways—set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.*" And yet you have gone out of God's house, and have forgotten what manner of men you were. You have quenched the Spirit, you have done despite to the Spirit of grace; you have put far from you the struggles of your conscience; you have throttled those infant prayers that were beginning to cry in your heart; you have drowned those new-born desires that were just springing up; you have put away from you everything that was good and sacred; you have turned again to your own ways, and have once more wandered on the mountains of sin, and in the valley of iniquity. Ah! my friends, just think, then, for a moment, that in *all this you have despised God*. I am certain, if the Holy Spirit would but apply this one solemn truth to your consciences this morning, this Hall of Music would be turned into a house of mourning, and this place would become a Bochim, a place of weeping and lamentation. Oh to have despised God, to have trampled under foot the Son of Man, to have passed by his cross, to have rejected the wooings of his love and the warnings of his grace! How solemn! Did you ever think of this before? You have thought it was but despising man; will ye now think of it as despising Christ? For Christ has spoken to you. Ah! God is my witness, that oftentimes Christ hath wept with these eyes, and spoken to you with these lips. I have sought nothing but the winning of your souls. Sometimes with rough words have I endeavoured to drive you to the cross, and at other times with weeping accents have I sought to weep you to my Redeemer; and sure I am, I did not speak myself then, but Jesus spoke through me, and inasmuch as ye did hear and weep, and then went away and did forget, remember that Christ spoke to you. 'Twas he who said, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" 'twas he who said, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden;" 'twas he who warned you, that if you neglected this great salvation you must perish; and in having put away the warning and rejected the invitation, you have not despised us, but you have despised our Master; and woe unto you, except ye repent, for 'tis a fearful thing to have despised the voice of him that speaketh from heaven.

II. And now we must notice the second point, namely, that **THE REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL AGGRAVATES MEN'S SIN**. Now, do not let me be misunderstood. I have heard of persons who, having gone to the house of God, have been filled with a sense of sin, and at last they have been driven almost to despair, for Satan has tempted them to forsake the house of God; for says he, "The more you go, the more you increase your condemnation." Now I believe that this is an error; we do not increase our condemnation by going to the house of God; we are far more likely to increase it by stopping away; for in stopping away from the house of God there is a double rejection of Christ; you reject him even with the outward mind, as well as with the inward spirit; you neglect even the lying at the pool of Bethesda; you are worse than the man who lay at the pool, but could not get in. You will not lie there, and therefore, neglecting the hearing of the Word of God, you do indeed incur a fearful doom; but if you go up to the house of God, sincerely seeking a blessing, if you do not get comfort—if you do not find grace in the means, still, if you go there devoutly seeking it, your condemnation is not increased thereby. Your sin is not aggravated merely by the hearing of the gospel, but by the wilful and wicked rejection of it when it is heard. The man who listens to the sound of the gospel, and after having heard it, turns upon his heel with a laugh, or who, after hearing time after time, and being visibly affected, allows the cares and the pleasures of this wicked life, to come in and choke the seed—such a man does in a fearful measure increase his guilt.

And now we will just notice why, in a two-fold measure, he does this. Because, in the first place, *he gets a new sin altogether, that he never had before*, and beside that, he aggravates all his other sins. Bring me here a Hottentot, or a man from Kamschatka, a wild savage who has never listened to the Word. That man may have every sin in the catalogue of guilt except one; but that one I am sure he has not. He has not the sin of rejecting the gospel when it is preached to him. But you, when you hear the gospel, have an opportunity for committing a fresh sin; and if you have rejected it, you have added a fresh iniquity to all those others that hang

about your neck. I have often been rebuked by certain men who have erred from the truth, for preaching the doctrine that it is a sin in men, if they reject the gospel of Christ. I care not for every opprobrious title: I am certain that I have the warrant of God's Word in so preaching, and I do not believe that any man can be faithful to men's souls and clear of their blood, unless he bears his frequent and solemn testimony upon this vital subject. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me." "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sack-cloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you." "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin." "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompence, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." I have been quoting, you see, some scripture passages, and if they do not mean that unbelief is a sin, and *the sin*, which, above all others, damns men's souls, they do not mean anything at all, but they are just a dead letter in the Word of God. Now, adultery and murder, and theft, and lying—all these are damning, and deadly sins; but repentance can cleanse all these, through the blood of Christ. But to reject Christ, destroys a man hopelessly. The murderer, the thief, the drunkard, may yet enter the kingdom of heaven, if, repenting of his sins, he will lay hold on the cross of Christ; but with these sins, a man is inevitably lost, if he believeth not on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, my hearers, will you consider for one moment what an awful sin this is, which you add to all your other sins. Everything lies in the bowels of this sin—the rejecting of Christ. There is murder in this; for if the man on the scaffold rejects a pardon, does he not murder himself? There is pride in this; for you reject Christ, because your proud hearts have turned you aside. There is rebellion in this; for we rebel against God when we reject Christ. There is high treason in this; for you reject a king; you put far from you, him, who is crowned king of the earth, and you incur therefore the weightiest of all guilt. Oh! to think that the Lord Jesus should come from heaven—to think for a moment that he should hang upon the tree—that there he should die in agonies extreme, and that from that cross he should this day look down upon you, and should say, "Come unto me, ye weary and ye heavy laden;" that you should still turn away from him,—it is the unkindest stab of all. What more brutish, what more devilish, than to turn away from him who gave his life for you? Oh that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end!

But again, we do not only add a new sin to the catalogue of guilt, but *we aggravate all the rest*. You cannot sin so cheap as other people, you, who have had the gospel. When the unenlightened and ignorant sin, their conscience does not prick them; and there is not that guilt in the sin of the ignorant, that there is in the sin of the enlightened. Did you steal before? that was bad enough; but hear the gospel and continue a thief, and you are a thief indeed. Did you lie before you heard the gospel? The liar shall have his portion in the lake; but lie after hearing it: and it seems as if the fire of Tophet should be fanned up to a seven-fold fury. He who sins ignorantly, hath some little excuse; but he who sins against light and knowledge, sins presumptuously; and under the law there was no atonement for this, for presumptuous sins were out of the pale of legal atonement, although

blessed be God, Christ hath atoned for even these, and he that believeth shall be saved, despite even his guilt. Oh ! I beseech you, recollect that the sin of unbelief blackens every other sin. It is like Jeroboam. It is said of him, he sinned and made Israel to sin. So unbelief sins itself and leads to every other sin. Unbelief is the file by which you sharpen the axe, and the coultter, and the sword, which you use in rebellion against the Most High. Your sins become more exceeding sinful, the more you disbelieve in Christ, the more you know of him; and the longer you reject him. This is God's truth; but a truth that is to be spoken with reluctance, and with many groanings in our spirits. Oh to have such a message to deliver to you, to *you* I say, for if there be a people under heaven to whom my text applies, it is you. If there is one race of men in the world, who have more to account for than others, it is yourselves. There are doubtless others, who are on an equality with you, who sit under a faithful and earnest ministry; but as God shall judge betwixt you and me at the great day, to the utmost of my power I have been faithful to your souls. I have never in this pulpit sought by hard words, by technical language, to magnify my own wisdom. I have spoken to you plainly; and not a word, to the best of my knowledge, has escaped these lips, which every one of you could not understand. You have had a simple gospel. I have not stood here and preached *coldly* to you. I could say as I came up yon stairs, "The burden of the Lord was upon me;" for my heart has come here heavy, and my soul has been hot within me, and when I have preached feebly, my words may have been uncouth, and the language far from proper, but *heart* never has been wanting. This whole soul has spoken to you; and if I could have ransacked heaven and earth to find language that might have won you to the Saviour, I would have done so. I have not shunned to reprove you; I have never minced matters. I have spoken to this age of its iniquities, and to you of your sins. I have not softened down the Bible to suit the carnal tastes of men. I have said *damn*, where God said *damn*—I have not sweetened it into "condemn." I have not minced matters, nor endeavoured to veil or conceal the truth, but as to every man's conscience in the sight of God, have I endeavoured to commend the gospel, earnestly and with power, and with a plain, outspoken, earnest, and honest ministry. I have not kept back the glorious doctrines of grace, although by preaching them the enemies of the cross have called me an Antinomian; nor have I been afraid to preach man's solemn responsibility, although another tribe have slandered me as an Arminian. And in saying this, I say it not in a way of glorying, but I say it for your rebuke, if you have rejected the gospel, for you shall have sinned far above that of any other men; in casting away Christ, a double measure of the fury of the wrath of God shall fall on you. Sin, then, is aggravated by the rejection of Christ.

III. And now, in the third place, THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST TAKES AWAY ALL EXCUSE FROM THOSE WHO HEAR IT AND REJECT IT. "Now have they no cloke for their sin." A cloak is a very poor covering for sin, when there is an all-seeing eye to look through it. In the great day of the tempest of God's wrath a cloak will be a very poor shelter; but still man is always fond of a cloak. In the day of cold and rain we see men gathering their cloaks about them, and if they have no shelter and no refuge, still they feel a little comforted by their garment. And so it is with you; you will gather together, if you can, an excuse for your sin, and when conscience pricks you, you seek to heal the wound with an excuse. And even in the day of judgment, although a cloak will be a sorry covering, yet it will be better than nothing at all. "But now ye have no cloke for your sin." The traveller is left in the rain without his covering, exposed to the tempest without that garment which once did shelter him. "Now ye have no cloke for your sin,"—discovered, detected, and unmasked, ye are left inexcusable, without a cloak for your iniquity. And now let me just notice how the preaching of the gospel, when it is faithfully performed, takes away all cloaks for sin.

In the first place, one man might get up and say, "I did not know I was doing wrong when I committed such and such an iniquity." Now, *that* you cannot say. God has by his law told you solemnly what is wrong. There stand the ten commandments; and there stands the comment of our Master where he has enlarged upon the commandment, and told us that the old law "Thou shalt not commit adultery," forbade also all sins of the lascivious look and the evil eye. If the Sepoy commits iniquity, there is a cloak for it. I doubt not that his conscience tells him that he does wrong, but his sacred books teach that he is doing right, and therefore he has that cloak. If the Mahommedan commits lust, I

doubt not his conscience doth prick him, but his sacred books give him liberty. But you profess to believe your Bibles, and have them in your houses, and have the preachers of them in all your streets; and therefore when you sin, you sin with the proclamation of the law upon the very wall, before your eyes—you do wilfully violate a well-known law which has come from heaven, and come to you.

Again, you might say, "When I sinned, I did not know how great would be the punishment." Of this also, by the gospel, you are left without excuse, for did not Jesus Christ tell you, and does he not tell you every day, that those who will not have him shall be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth? Hath he not said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal?" Does he not himself declare that the wicked shall be burned up with unquenchable fire? Has he not told you of a place where their worm dieth not and where their fire is not quenched? And the ministers of the gospel have not shunned to tell you this too. You have sinned, though you knew you would be lost by it. You have taken the poisonous draught, not thinking that it was harmless: you knew that every drop in the cup was scalding with damnation, and yet you have taken the cup and drained it to its dregs. You have destroyed your own souls with your eyes open; you have gone like a fool to the stocks, like an ox to the slaughter, and like a lamb you have licked the knife of the butcher. In this, then, you are left without excuse.

But some of you may say, "Ah, I heard the gospel, it is true, and I knew that I was doing wrong, but I did not know what I must do to be saved." Is there one among you who can urge such an excuse as this? Methinks you will not have the impudence to do so. "Believe and live," is preached every day in your hearing. Many of you this ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years have been hearing the gospel, and you dare not say, "I did not know what the gospel was." From your earliest childhood many of you have listened to it. The name of Jesus was mingled with the hush of lullaby. You drank in a holy gospel with your mother's milk, and yet despite all that, you have never sought Christ. "Knowledge is power," men say. Alas! Knowledge, when not used, is *wrath*. WRATH. WRATH to the uttermost, against the man who knows, and yet doth that which he knoweth to be right.

Methinks I can hear another say, "Well, I heard the gospel preached, but I never had a good example set me." Some of you may say that, and it would be partially true; but there are others of you, concerning whom I may say that this would be a lying excuse. Ah! man; you have been very fond of speaking of the inconsistencies of Christians. You have said, "They do not live as they ought;" and alas, there is too much truth in what you have said. But there was one Christian whom you knew, and whose character you were compelled to admire; do not you remember her? It was the mother who brought you forth. That has always been the one difficulty with you up to this day. You could have rejected the gospel very easily, but your mother's example stood before you, and you could not overcome that. Do you not remember amongst the first early dawns of your recollection, how you opened your little eyes in the morning, and you saw a mother's loving face looking down upon you, and you caught her with a tear in her eye, and you heard her say, "God bless the child, may he call the Redeemer blessed!" You remember how your father did often chide you; *she* did seldom chide, but she often spoke in tones of love. Recollect that little upper room, where she took you aside, and putting her arms round your neck, dedicated you to God, and prayed that the Lord would save you in your childhood. Remember the letter she gave you, and your book in which she wrote your name when you left the parental roof to go abroad, and the sorrow with which she wrote to you when she heard you had begun to plunge in gaiety and mix with the ungodly: recollect that sorrowful look with which she did wring your hand the last time you left her. Remember how she said to you, "You will bring my hairs with sorrow to the grave, if you walk in the ways of iniquity." Well, you knew that what she said was not cant; there was reality in that. You could laugh at this minister, you could say it was *his business*, but at her you could not scoff; she was a Christian, there was no mistake about it. How often did she put up with your angry temper, and bear with your rough manners, for she was a sweet spirit, almost too good for earth—and you recollect that. You were not there when she was dying, you could not arrive in time; but she said to her friend as she was dying, "There is only one thing that I want, then I could die happy—oh, that I

could see my children walking in the truth." Now, I apprehend such an example leaves you without a cloak for your wickedness, and if you commit iniquity after that, how fearful must be the weight of your woe.

But others of you can say that you had no such mother; your first school was the street, and the first example you ever had was that of a swearing father. Recollect, my friend, there is one perfect example—Christ; and that you have read of, though you have not seen him. Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, was a perfect man; in him was there no sin, neither was there guile in his mouth. And if you have never seen anything like Christian worth any where else, yet you can see it in Christ; and in venturing such an excuse as this, remember you have ventured upon a lie, for the example of Christ, the works of Christ, as well as the words of Christ, leave you without excuse for your sin.

Ah, and I think I hear one more excuse offered, and that is this: "Well, I certainly had many advantages, but they were never sent home to my conscience so that I felt them." Now, there are very few of you here who can say that. Some of you will say, "Yes, I heard the minister, but he never made an impression upon me." Ah, young men and young women, and all of you this morning, I must be a witness against you in the day of judgment that this is untrue. For, but now, your consciences were touched; did I not see some soft tears of repentance—I trust they were such—flowing but just now. No, you have not always been unmoved by the gospel; you have grown old now, and it takes a deal to stir you, but it was not always so. There was a time in your youth, when you were very susceptible of impression. Remember, the sins of your youth will cause your bones to rot, if you have still persevered in rejecting the gospel. Your old heart has grown hard, still you are without excuse; you did feel once, ay, and even now you cannot help feeling. I know there are some of you that can scarcely keep your seats at the thought of your iniquities; and you have almost vowed, some of you, that this day you will seek God, and the first thing you will do, will be to climb to your chamber, and shut the door, and seek the Lord. Ah, but I remember a story of one, who remarked to a minister, what a wonderful thing it was to see so many people weeping. "Nay," said he, "I will tell you something more wonderful still, that so many will forget all they went about when they get outside the door." And you will do this. Still, when you have done it, you will recollect that you have not been without the strivings of God's Spirit. You will remember that God has, this morning, as it were, put a hurdle across your road, digged a ditch in your way, and put up a hand-post, and said, "Take warning! beware, beware, beware! you are rushing madly into the ways of iniquity!" And I have come before you this morning, and in God's name I have said, "Stop, stop, stop, thus saith the Lord 'consider your ways, why will ye die? Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die O house of Israel!'" And, now, if ye will put this from you, it must be even so; if you will put out these sparks, if ye will quench this first burning torch, it must be so! On your own head be your blood; at your own door lay your iniquities.

IV. But now I have one thing more to do. And it is awful work; for I have as it were to PUT ON THE BLACK CAP AND PRONOUNCE THE SENTENCE OF CONDEMNATION. For those who live and die rejecting Christ there is a most fearful doom. They shall perish with an utter destruction. There are degrees of punishment; but the highest degree is given to the man who rejects Christ. You have noticed that passage, I dare say, that the liar and the whoremonger, and drunkards shall have their portion—who do you suppose with?—with *unbelievers*; as if hell was made first of all for unbelievers—as if the pit was digged not for whoremongers, and swearers, and drunkards, but for men who despise Christ, because that is the A 1 sin, the cardinal vice, and men are condemned for that. Other iniquities come following after them, but this one goes before them to judgment. Imagine for a moment that time has passed, and that the day of judgment is come. We are all gathered together, both quick and dead. The trumpet-blast waxes exceeding loud and long. We are all attentive, expecting something marvellous. The exchange stands still in its business; the shop is deserted by the tradesman; the crowded streets are filled. All men stand still; they feel that the last great business-day is come, and that now they must settle their accounts for ever. A solemn stillness fills the air; no sound is heard. All, all is noiseless. Presently a great white cloud with solemn state sails through the sky, and then—hark! the twofold clamour of the startled earth. On that cloud there sits one like unto the Son of Man. Every eye looks, and at last there is heard a unanimous shout—

"It is he! It is he!" and after that you hear on the one hand, shouts of "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Welcome, Welcome, Welcome Son of God." But mixed with that there is a deep bass, composed of the weeping and the wailing of the men who have persecuted him, and who have rejected him. Listen! I think I can dissect the sonnet; I think I can hear the words as they come separately, each one of them, tolling like a death knell. What say they? They say, "Rocks hide us, mountains fall upon us, hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the throne." And shall you be among the number of those who say to the rocks "Hide us?"

My impenitent hearer, I suppose for a moment that you have gone out of this world, and that you have died impenitent, and that you are among those who are weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth. Oh! what will then be your terror! Blanched cheeks, and knocking knees are nothing, compared to thy horror of heart, when thou shalt be drunken, but not with wine, and when thou shalt reel to and fro, with the intoxication of amazement, and shall fall down, and roll in the dust for horror and dismay. For there he comes, and there he is, with fierce, fire-darting eye; and now the time is come for the great division. The voice is heard, "Gather my people from the four winds of heaven, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." They are gathered at the right hand, and there they are. And now saith he, "Gather up the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn." And you are gathered, and on the left hand there you are, gathered into the bundle. All that is wanted is the lighting of the pile. Where shall be the torch that shall kindle them? The tares are to be burned: where is the flame? The flame comes out of his mouth, and it is composed of words like these—"Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Do you linger? "*Depart!*" Do you seek a blessing? "*Ye are cursed.*" I curse you with a curse. Do ye seek to escape? *It is everlasting fire.* Do ye stop and plead? No, "*I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and ye regarded me not; therefore I will mock at your calamity, I will laugh when your fear cometh.*" "*Depart, again, I say; depart for ever!*" And you are gone. And what is your reflection? Why, it is this: "Oh! would to God that I never had been born! Oh! that I had never heard the gospel preached, that I might never have had the sin of rejecting it!" This will be the gnawing of the worm in your conscience—"I knew better, but I did not do better."—As I sowed the wind, it is right I should reap the whirlwind; I was checked, but I would not be stopped; I was wooed, but I would not be invited. Now I see that I have murdered myself. Oh! thought above all thoughts most deadly. I am lost, lost, lost! And this is the horror of horrors: I have caused myself to be lost; I have put from me the gospel of Christ; I have destroyed myself.

Shall this be so with thee, my hearer? Shall this be so with thee? I pray it may not! O may the Holy Spirit now constrain thee to come to Jesus, for I know that thou art too vile to yield, unless he compels thee. But I hope for thee. Methinks I hear thee say, "What must I do to be saved?" Let me tell you the way of salvation, and then farewell. If thou wouldest be saved, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" for the Scripture says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." There he hangs, dying on his cross! look to him and live.

"Venture on him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

Be you wicked, filthy, depraved, degraded, you are still invited to Christ. The devil's castaways Christ takes in—the offscouring, the dross, the scum, the draff, the sewerage of this world, is now invited to Christ. Come to him now, and obtain mercy. But if ye harden your hearts,

"The Lord in anger dress'd,
Shall lift his hand and swear,
'You that despis'd my promis'd rest,
Shall have no portion there.'"

THE FADED FLOWER.

A SERMON

PREACHED

ON SUNDAY EVENING, the 25th of APRIL, 1858,

BY THE

REV. JAMES HUGHES,

Wesleyan Minister.

IN

THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHAPEL,

TROWBRIDGE, WILTS.

OCCASIONED by the DEATH of the LATE Mr. W. H. EDMONDS.

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"The flower fadeth; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it."—Isaiah xl. 7.

THERE is something very affecting in the death of young people. To see a young man like our beloved friend, Mr. Edmonds, in the morning of life, sicken, droop, and die, is a scene which, regarded in itself, apart from the hopes of the gospel is very saddening. But there is nothing new in this. The language of the Book of Job is, "They die in youth." Yes, before that early age of the world, as well as oft since, this assertion has met with its frequent and mournful fulfilment. If this were indeed the first death of a young man, it would affect us most deeply. It would be like seeing the sun about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, sinking down and burying itself beneath the horizon, instead of running his usual course from east to west. Or to keep to the figure of the text, as if the flower when bursting forth, gradually unfolding its hidden beauties, and ere as yet it had reached its full proportions, checked in its expansion, were suddenly to droop and perish. But, alas! the premature fading of the flower is so often seen in the gardens of mortals, and men, "in fulfilling their course," are so frequently arrested by the hand of death, and plunged into the darkness of the grave before the noon of life, that we fail to feel the deep and sad impression which such events are fitted to produce. It is once more brought home to us in the removal of one whom many of us knew, and whom to know, was also to respect and love. The word of God has made everything around us vocal with instruction; stamped its lessons of inspired wisdom on the page of nature, and rendered the whole world around and above us auxiliary to its purpose of sacred instruction. The flower of the field is oft the subject of beautiful and affecting allusion in the word of God, as well as an example of God's care, as also a type of frail and perishable humanity. The passages in which man is compared to a flower are many and striking—"He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down." "*As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For*

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the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." The same interesting figure is involved in the passage out of the midst of which we have selected our text, as well as in its parallel in 1 Peter i. 24, "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away." These are a sample of those affecting passages in which the Spirit of God has rendered the perishing grass and the frail flower the emblems of our perishable and mortal nature. How strongly must we be reminded of such descriptions of humanity when called to mourn the loss of a young man in the prime of life. To see the frame, when it is usual for it to acquire additional strength and hardihood, shrinking away under the touch of disease, until the declining process results in death. At once the thought of the fading flower presents itself to our minds, and we seem to hear a voice which says to us, Cry—"The flower fadeth; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it."

The Lord sanctify this solemn service to us, that henceforth we may live as "strangers and pilgrims upon earth who desire a better country, that is, an heavenly."

In dealing more directly with the words of the text, we notice—

I. That the flower is beautiful. Flowers are made as if to ornament the world. There is no man however blunt his senses, who does not at once perceive the beauty of a flower. Some flowers are much more beautiful than others. But every kind, especially of cultivated flowers is beautiful. And is there not in man, regarded as the creature of God, something that is beautiful? "The human face Divine." Yes, there is something in the bodily formation of man that renders him more attractive than any other creature in the world. His superiority among all other creatures of God below the skies, entitles him to be called "the flower" of this lower creation. Nor can we wonder at this, when we remember that man was made to be "the temple of the Holy Ghost." How great must have been the beauty of "man primeval" when God had just made him. His soul and body pure and spotless. His external form corresponding to the inward excellence. The earthen vessel as yet unmarred, fit casket of a pure and holy spirit. "The earthly house of this tabernacle," stamped with such external beauty as befitted the spiritual opulence of its immortal resident. His face radiant with the image of God; the God of light and love, in whose likeness he was made. Truly, he could have been only "a little lower than the angels" when God set him over the works of his hands. What majesty and grace there must have been in the whole bearing and movements of the new creature. The last and best made of the whole of this lower creation, God's chief wormanship, the perfection of his creatures here below. Surely the human flower beamed with beauty when its Great Creator had newly formed and planted it in Eden. But, alas, the blight of sin has brought a dimness over the splendour, and much of the original beauty is lost. Nevertheless, there is something still in man to remind us of the primeval dignity and loveliness. It is possible that some great physical transformation has taken place in the serpent more subtle than any beast of the field by which man's ruin was instrumentally accomplished. But we have no reason to suppose that any such change was produced in the human form by the fall of man from God. For this reason, that that body was yet designed to be in its "redeemed state the temple of the Holy Ghost." And it is evident that man alone of all other creatures in the

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world is intended to be "the shrine of Deity," "the habitation of God through the Spirit." But there is something in the structure of man which seems to say plainly, "You were intended to be the temple of God!" Alas! Satan has usurped the seat of God; sin reigns in the dwelling-place of holiness, and as the fruit of this, much of the beauty is gone. And we see had and vile passions oft depicted in the "form and fashion" of the countenance. Anger and hatred put in their lineaments, vile lust paints some of the features, a sour selfishness reflects itself, and sometimes a dark despondency over-shadows the face of man. The dominion of unholy feeling, and the practice of sensual habits enbrute and demonize the human face, so that "the show of their countenance doth witness against them." But when the soul comes fully under the dominion of God's sanctifying grace, much of the original beauty is retrieved, and an habitual course of devotion and piety is oft seen to give to "the outer man" a heavenly stamp, the mark of the Lamb in the forehead. Moses brought down with him from his long communion with God on Sinai a face that shone with glory. And the council as they looked stedfastly on Stephen "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel"—a face in which beamed forth angelic sweetness and dignity, the result perhaps of a special baptism of heavenly fire which at that moment came upon him. Nor can we think of the change through which Saul of Tarsus passed during the three days of his spiritual birth, without supposing that it left its record on the face of the Cilician Israelite. It is not too much to think that the fiery gleam of his dark eye and the *hauteur* of the young persecutor's countenance were among the "old things," all of which "passed away." And that when he became numbered with the "elect of God, holy and beloved, and put on bowels of mercies, kindness and long-suffering," there came up also over his noble countenance a softened expression.

None who will be able to recall the form of our beloved young friend, but will remember that there was in him much that was lovely to the eye. There was a "goodliness" in the flower, a "grace" in "the fashion of it." That the *oveof* Christ had much to do with this I have no doubt. He was early converted to God, and being in possession of deep and sincere piety, the inward life of God gave beauty to the flower which has, alas, now faded away before our eyes. If he had contracted and pursued evil habits, like many other young men, the beauty of the flower would have been marred. We should not have seen that habitual *cheerfulness* which reigned around and lighted up the features of our young friend, for it sprang from the peace of God. We should have missed that well known *openness and benevolence* of expression; for it was produced by the "truth and grace" which were in him. We should have looked in vain for that purity which beamed forth in him, for that was the result of sanctifying love. The beauty of this faded flower was the "beauty of holiness." But if the flower was beautiful here, how much more so now? If our vision could follow him into that crowd of beauteous forms which encircle the throne of God, and distinguish him there, surely we should find, that his change has greatly heightened his loveliness. It is impossible for us to understand the mighty effect produced upon the spirit by the vision of God our Saviour in his glorified form. The contemplation of Jesus through a glass darkly, is transforming; how much more, when with unveiled vision we gaze on "the king in his beauty!"

Our brother has passed away from us; gone from the holy into the holiest; has "departed to be with Christ;" and how much more like Christ is he now

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become? "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is!" But are the saints with Christ as soon as the breath passes away from their nostrils! Some have felt a difficulty in connection with this matter, not being able to understand how a spirit can exist apart from a material form; and with a view to escape this difficulty, it has been supposed that the disembodied spirit will be invested with some light material vehicle, called (as this notion supposes), by the apostle, "our house which is from heaven."

It is not necessary that we should be prepared to solve all the mysteries of such a subject. It is far more important and appropriate to us to inquire whether the Scriptures teach the existence of the soul in the *separate state*.

1. Then look at the representation which our Lord gives of the matter in the case of the rich man and Lazarus. "The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." *What* was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom! The soul, undoubtedly, and not the body. So again in the opposite case—"The rich man also died, and was *buried*; and in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torments." The body found a resting-place in some ornamented sepulchre, but the soul was cast into the abyss of woe, the deep grave of those who are separated to endless death. Here it is evident that the soul lived, and was conscious of joy in the one case, and of torment in the other, immediately after death. We draw this inference from this portion of our Lord's teaching irrespective of any interpretation evidently adopted for the sake of theory.

2. Again, our Lord's reply to the prayer of the penitent thief on the cross agrees with the foregoing view. "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, *To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*" "To day," ere thy crucified body is taken down from the cross, soon as the mortal struggle is over, "thou shalt be with me, (whom in thy last hour thou hast confessed before men,) in paradise," I shall be there to receive thee. "Paradise" is thought of by some under the notion of heaven's *ante-chamber*. But if there be any accuracy in this view, it is an *ante-chamber* not because the site or locality is somewhere short of the Divine presence; but rather on the ground of the incomplete and *expectant* condition of the saints between their departure and the sound of the "trump of God." "*Waiting*," (as in an *ante-chamber*), "for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body," until which event the glory and the bliss of "the heirs of God" will not be full.

3. With this agrees apostolic teaching. "Therefore," says St. Paul, "we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord—(for we walk by faith and not by sight)—we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." If the apostle's view is correct, the sanctified soul dwelling in the body is absent from the Lord. But ceasing to dwell in the body it is at once placed in the presence of our Lord; and hence elsewhere he expresses "A desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." To depart and to be with Christ being inseparable, the one leading at once and invariably to the other.

From the foregoing considerations we joyfully infer that holy souls enter at once into a conscious and happy existence upon the dissolution of the frame. And is it not in accordance with this truth, we read of "the spirits of just men made perfect," spirits as yet without the body. Whatever difficulty therefore may appear to us in conceiving a spirit's existence apart from a

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material vehicle; it is clearly revealed to us that souls, whether holy or unholy, cease not to exist between death and the resurrection morn. Let us therefore feel assured that our young brother, who has lately left us, is now in the enjoyment of a conscious and blissful existence. That which formed the seat of intelligence and holiness in him still endures. It was not the wasted frame which he left behind him that thought and felt, adored and worshipped, trusted and loved Christ, but something spiritual, and that something was the living and loving soul which still lives, and shall live for ever. And if we divested of the fleshly veil could but "see him as he is," we should find the spirit of this just young man made perfect, beautiful, and radiant, reflecting the image of the Son of God. And as it respects its old frail companion which it has left behind, the "vile body," it also shall rest in hope, and although it shall "see corruption," yet "this corruptible shall put on incorruption." O what a glorious change shall pass upon the dissolved frame when glorious and beautiful, like the present form of Him who loved us, it shall rise from its quiet resting-place. For "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first."

"And every form, and every face,
Be heavenly and divine."

And henceforth the flower shall have more even than its primeval beauty and splendour.

II. But though beautiful, "the flower" is frail. And this is one of the chief reasons why it stands as the emblem of feeble man. The withering grass, the fragile flower, the frailest of all the vegetable productions of the earth are the pictures of our perishable nature. It is not the tree of expansive girth, which bears up under the repeated strokes of the axe, not the sturdy oak which braves the rude storm of centuries, but the flower, slender and easily injured, which trembles even in the breeze, is prostrated by the storm, and may be crushed by the foot of the heedless passenger. Various are the means by which the life of the flower may be destroyed; sometimes it is cut down and withereth;" at other times it is nipt by the cold blast and perishes; or it is seen to decay, and to reach its destruction by a gradual process, because a worm at the root is extracting its life. The flower is easily injured, a very slight thing may prove fatal to its existence; such also is man; what trivial causes have often operated to the destruction of health and life. What innumerable means may remove man from the face of the earth. You cannot read a newspaper but you are impressed with the truth that

"Dangers stand thick through all the ground
To push us to the tomb,
And fierce diseases wait around,
To hurry mortals home."

Accidents, diseases, and fatal complaints without number, and without name, may cut down or blast the frail flower. We are in danger from the wind that blows, the rain that descends, the cold and heat that alternately prevail, and invisible poisons that float in the air—"For what is your life? It is even a vapour which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away;" something very unsubstantial—the burning heat may consume it, the passing breeze disperse it. "Surely every man at his best estate is altogether vanity!" While all are frail, some are peculiarly so; it is their lot to in-

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herit a feeble and delicate frame, predisposed to disease. This most likely was the case with our lamented friend. He was a lovely, but frail flower; and the dreaded consumption, by the permission of God, fixed its fangs in the frail frame, and though assailed by medical skill and effort, never relinquished its hold until "the precious life" was destroyed. "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils. For wherein is he to be accounted of?"

III. The flower is short lived. All flowers are not of equal duration; some perish speedily, but none of them last long; they come forth, and for a season they please us with their gay appearance; but by and by we see signs of decay. The flower is fading, and soon the place thereof knows it no more. Thus it is with human beings. Some perish in the very bud of their existence, they scarcely peep forth above the soil ere they are swept away; others live to develope their physical and mental properties more fully, and like the full blown flower are cut down in their prime; and some (though their number is comparatively small), live through the usual stages of human life, until a gradual decay of nature brings them to the dust of death. Yet man, at best, like the flower of the field is short lived. His stay on earth at the very longest is but brief. There is a mournful pathos in the teaching of the inspired word on this subject that softens and subdues—"Man that is born of a woman is of *few days* and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower and is cut down. He fleeth also as a *shadow*, and continueth not." Jacob's estimate of his one hundred and thirty years pilgrimage on earth is solemnly affecting—"Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." Few in looking back upon them, and few in looking forward to the unending days of that eternity on the brink of which he stood a bending figure. The words of the Psalmist are so humbling, that the lofty looks of man are at once brought down in their presence, and the pride of the heart perishes under their influence—"Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee." Before thee, who "art from everlasting to everlasting." It is in comparison with eternity, with infinite duration, that our life on earth shrinks away into an almost inappreciable point. O what is life, our brief life on earth, in comparison with everlasting existence! How short a period must it appear when looked back upon from the eternal world. How small must "the span of life" appear to our brother now, compared with that unending eternity on which he has entered. Well might the apostle regard it as of momentary duration. For truly it is no more in contrast with eternity; it is the lightning flash, we are born, we live, we die, and how quickly do these important facts follow each other in our history. And yet how vastly important is this brief period; inasmuch, as during it alone can we acquire a meetness for eternal glory. Our conduct in time determines our condition for eternity. During our life's short day we acquire a character which will cleave to us for ever, and will form to us a source of endless bliss or woe. If, while here we walk "in the error of our way," it will soon conduct us into a dark and distressed eternity; but, if while here we "follow holiness," how speedily shall we "enter into the joy of our Lord." O, sinner, think there is but a step between you and your doom! Life is soon gone; and if death find you unprepared, you sink into remediless woe. Is it not most awful to think that you are living so near the world of woe and with so little concern to escape it! O sinner, and man of the world! it cannot be worth your while to cleave to so perishing a portion; how mad-like to set your affections on things which are upon the earth,

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and not on things above; to seek your portion in this life, and not in the life beyond. For as you brought nothing with you into the world, it is certain you can carry nothing out; nothing but your sin or holiness to draw down upon you the dark frown of Jehovah, or to encircle you with the light of his favour. And how speedily must you go out of this world which you so ardently love and worship—"For the hour of your departure is at hand!" O sinner! consider that the sin you cherish in opposition to God's will you cannot long hold. Life is only a moment. It is as short for you as for the Christian. O how insane to indulge in sin; to "neglect the great salvation;" to exclude yourself from eternal blessedness for the sake of momentary gratification! Away, O away with the right hand, or the right eye, or the right foot, and fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you, "ere the master of the house hath arisen and shut too the door."

"A point of time, a moment's space,
Removes you to your glorious place,
Or shuts you up in hell!"

O weeping, foot-sore and heart-sore Christian, wipe away your tears. It is not worth while to weep with eternal joy so near to you. It is not worth while to repine at the toils of a journey so short, so near its close. Look up! see! you are already "come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God." You are already at the foot of the mount. Our brother is gone up to its summit, and it will soon be yours to ascend. "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven," and you are almost come within reach of it. Labour on, pray on, hold on, and soon will you find yourself enshrined in the glory of your Lord.

IV. There is fragrance in flowers, and much more in some than in others. The scent is also sweet in some, in others it is sickly and offensive. Let this remind us of that moral influence which all men exert more or less upon others. We carry with us in all our movements in human society an influence which, like the fragrance of the flower, always surrounds us. This is less in some than in others. Station, talents, wealth, and force of character may give to some greater influence than others either for good or evil. Yet all alike have a measure of influence; every human flower scents to some extent the social atmosphere. In some the influence is sweet, reviving, and hallowing; in others it is poisonous and soul-destroying; some carry God with them, and they diffuse a divine influence whithersoever they go; others, alas! carry Satan with them and in them, and by their foul and foolish talk, and "their pernicious ways," they corrupt and destroy. Our influence while under the power of "the carnal mind" is for evil, we live to alienate men from God. Until possessed of decisive piety, we gather not to Christ, but scatter abroad, keep souls away from the refuge and the rest of guilty man. But when the flower becomes well baptized and penetrated with the dew of the Spirit—when the breath of the Lord passes through and purifies it, then its poisonous properties are destroyed, and it ceases to send forth its deadly exhalations. Then "if we live we live unto the Lord, and if we die we die unto the Lord, living or dying we are the Lord's."

It was the happiness of our young friend to have been "born of God" at rather an early period of life, and this blessed change prepared him to exert a good influence upon those with whom he was associated. When "Christ" became "formed in him," the flower sent forth a gracious fragrance. It was felt

by the young men with whom he was associated in business, several of whom he had a share in leading to salvation while he lived in the establishment from which he retired to die. One of his fellow-labourers in this good work speaking of him has said—"He has left a name in this place for zeal and usefulness which will never be forgotten." He was "always zealously affected in a good thing," especially in the religious training of the young. For which department of sacred service he was admirably fitted by his winning manners, his lively address, and overflowing kindness. While living in London, and then in a delicate state of health, he devoted himself most zealously in connection with a Ragged School. Constrained by the love of Christ, he would sally "forth into the streets and lanes of the city," and by his urgency and kindness, "compel them to come in." He obtained a powerful influence over them, and it is not too much to hope that at some future day he will meet some of those poor outcast children, not in the dirty and ragged raiment in which he found them in the streets and in the lanes of London, but clad "in white raiment and having palms in their hands" before the throne of God.

And now, what influence are you exerting upon human society? Is it for good or for evil? It must be for one or the other. *Fathers and mothers*, what influence do you exert upon your children? What effect has your daily walk and conversation upon them? Does your life speak for God? Does it allure them to Christ? Is your example such as they might safely follow? How dreadful is the thought that many parents live to destroy their children's souls by the poison of their example. *Masters and employers*, what kind of influence do you exert upon those with whom you have to do? Does the life speak clearly on behalf of Jesus? You diffuse an influence through your respective establishments. See, O! see! that it be for the healing of men's souls, and not in opposition to their salvation. *Young men and maidens*, what is the influence which you exert upon each other? O dreadful thought, some of you are living to aid each other's destruction; you breathe a poisonous breath upon each other's souls that pollutes and destroys. O what an awful thing to meet in the pit of woe with the ghost of one of whom you have spiritually murdered, to endure its reproach for ever, and listen to the stinging declaration issuing from lips maddened with everlasting torment—"If it were not for you, I should never have been here!" You would think it a dreadful thing to be overheard in your closet praying that God would curse your fellow-creatures. But will you not be shocked at the thought that your influence goes to fix a curse upon their souls which may prey upon their quivering vitals for ever? O come penitently to the cross, that you may receive "the promise of the spirit through faith," and then shall you live no more to curse but bless the world as you pass through it. The fragrance of a flower oftentimes increases in dying. And so it is with the Christian; as he approaches his end while the hand of death is upon him, he exerts a more powerful influence than through life—"Go into the chamber where the good man meets his fate," and it seems filled with heavenly fragrance. Very obtuse indeed must his sensibilities be who does not deeply feel the influence which the dying Christian diffuses around his death-bed. It is at once perceived and felt by those who are spiritual. A solemn, unearthly influence which awes and melts the heart. It was oft felt by those who visited our young brother during his late affliction—

"His final hour brought glory to his God."

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V. The fading of the flower is inevitable. Perish it must. Place it in the most favourable position and yet you cannot preserve it ; seek for it a nook where it shall be sheltered from "the wind's unkindly blast," as well as from "the sun's director ray," and yet "the momentary glories will waste, the short lived beauties will die away ;" cover it with glass, train and shelter it in the conservatory, and yet you cannot long conserve its frail life. The flower after all your care will perish. How strictly applicable to man whose death is no less certain than the fading of the flower. Attend to health with the most scrupulous care, surround yourselves with all the guards against disease and accident which human device and ingenuity may call into existence. And yet, after all, beyond the boundary which God has assigned to us, we cannot pass—"For is there not an appointed time for man upon the earth seeing his days are determined, and the number of his months are with God ? He hath set him his bounds that he cannot pass." The Great Author of our being has fixed at least the *maximum* of our stay on earth. Beyond this we cannot go ; though, alas ! we may come short even of this. Hence we read that "the wicked shall not live out half his days." The death of the flower is so certain, that you can name a period when you know it shall have occurred ; you cannot, it is true, name the precise moment when the last particle of life shall have left the flower ; but it would be an easy matter for you to name a time when you know it must be dead, and when "the place thereof shall know it no more." Even so, the period of our departure is to us unknown, nothing can be more uncertain. The time and the circumstances under which we shall breathe our last are wisely concealed from us ; yet it would be easy to name a time when not one of us shall be left on earth. The days of our years are three score years and ten ; and if by reason of strength they be four score years, yet is their strength then but labour and sorrow, so soon passeth it away and we are gone. So that each may say with Job in his affliction—"When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return." "A few years," at the very furthest, shall in the course of their revolutions have swept all the present population of the world from the face of the globe. We know that we are so constituted, that like the flower, beyond a certain period we cannot last. This earthly house of our tabernacle is so built that it can bear the pressure only of a certain number of years, when its dissolution must take place. This throbbing of the heart will cease, these continuous pulses will stop, the light of these eyes will depart, these ears will no longer be the medium of sounds, these active limbs will become stiff and motionless ; "the earth must return to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it."

Lastly. "The flower fadeth ; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." The meaning is "the wind of the Lord ;" the same word in Hebrew as in some other languages, having the signification of wind and of spirit. Bishop Lowth renders the words "the wind of Jehovah bloweth upon it." The allusion is doubtless to the hot winds which prevail in the east, blasting and consuming every green thing over which they pass. The Psalmist evidently alludes to this hot wind—(Psalm ciii. 15, 16,) "As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone ; and the place thereof shall know it no more."

The flower fades and perishes when a wind under the control and direction of God passeth over it. And thus would we connect the providence of God with the removal of our young brother, whose wasting some of us have

watched during the few last months. If "a sparrow falleth not to the ground without our Father," how much less can a Christian, a child of God be smitten down by the hand of death without his cognizance and permission? "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," and the death which is thus "precious" in his sight can be no chance work. Hence Job—"I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living;" thou who hast the keys of death and of Hades. It was the hand of a Friend, his Almighty and Everlasting Friend, that led our brother down to his quiet resting place in the dust. The consuming disease by which the frame was wasted, was only the wind of the Lord destroying the life of the flower. "He shall blow upon them, and they shall wither."

When we see a young man sicken and die, as the result of a cold, over exertion, or hereditary tendency, we are in danger of so interpreting the whole as to exclude the immediate and special providence of God. But we should remember that God veils himself behind secondary causes; for "the trial of our faith," for the exercise of which there could be no room, if he worked manifestly in the sight of our eyes. And if "we walk by faith, and not by sight," we shall recognize the interference of an allwise God in the removal of this amiable and useful young man, from whose ashes we are endeavouring to extract lessons that shall fit us to pass with a triumphant courage like his, "through the valley of the shadow of death." O no, lovely youth, it was not chance that removed thee, it was thy Master's voice that said unto thee, "It is enough; come up hither!"

In the last affliction of our deceased friend, the blessedness of our religion was most delightfully exhibited; a heavenly serenity reigned around his soul; a peace unbroken and unvaried by doubt, fear, or anxiety; his faith simple and childlike; his submission to the Divine will cheerful and unfeigned; his hope of heaven bright and cloudless; his conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ, unstained with a spot of guilt, uttered not the murmur of accusation; without rapture or depression, with calm Christian confidence he awaited the will of his Lord in his dismissal. O blessed gospel, whose inspiring hopes thus extract from death its sting, and take away from the grave its gloom! "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!"

The following conversation took place between our brother and his pastor while he lay pale and wan in the prostration of near dissolution. "Well, the conflict is almost over." "Almost." "It will be a glorious change." "O yes, I long to depart." "Do you feel Christ precious to you now?" "Every moment—every moment." "Well, you are going a little before us, and we shall all soon follow." "Yes, and I shall be there to welcome you." "Yes, and there will be some there to welcome you." His reply was an upward look of hope and assurance.

His pastor paid him one more visit, and found him quite on the bank of Jordan; the stream almost laving his feet, and in taking leave of him there, his last words were—"There is not a cloud!" In a short time after the minister had left him, having taken an affectionate leave of all his friends who were present, he requested to be placed in a comfortable position, and then extending his attenuated arms, he repeatedly said—"Come Lord Jesus, come quickly!" and exchanging the language of prayer for praise, he said—"Glory! glory! glory! glory!" then was heard a mortal sound—and then a deep silence—it was the silence of death—and the sanctified spirit had for-

saken the shrunken frame which we solemnly laid to rest in yonder cemetery to await the resurrection of the just.

Let us pause and reflect. We hear of the death of others, and others will soon hear of ours. We gather together to pay our last tribute of respect and affection to deceased friends, and soon others will gather together to carry us forth to our burial. We stand around the mouth of the open grave and hear solemn words pronounced over the confined remains of others; soon ours will be the cold, motionless, enclosed remains over which similar words will be sounded forth.

About the certainty of death there can be no dispute. Here the whole world is in unison of opinion. We differ on almost every other subject that may be submitted to our judgment. There is scarcely another truth which some men may not be found to deny, yet no man thinks of denying that he is mortal. "The living (if they know anything,) know that they must die."

Do you know this! and do you admit it! Then ask, O ask solemnly, "What after death for me remains?" Am I prepared for death! prepared for heaven! Say not, "It is of no use whether I consider this matter or not, for if I am to die a happy death, it shall be so." For does not God say, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end."

This is God's compassionate lament over inconsiderate souls, who approach death without thought. There is no hope for you if you will not consider. For want of consideration thousands perish. Let the thought then be deeply fixed in your heart. I must die; eternity follows death. Am I prepared for eternity! Am I found in Christ, forgiven and renewed? I charge you consider this matter! By the God that made you, by the Saviour who redeemed you, by the awful doom of inconsiderate souls who forget God, by the peace and triumph of the Christian's death and "the glory that shall follow." O thoughtless and undecided hearer, I entreat you, consider your latter end; how certain its arrival, how swift its approach, how awful its consequences to the unsaved, and turn at once to Jesus crucified, fly to those dear wounds of his. Then shall that which may have sprung up in your mind as a vague wish this evening, in the contemplation of this young Christian's deathbed, become a reality in your future history, for you shall "die the death of the righteous, and your last end shall be like his." God grant this for Christ's sake. Amen.

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A Sermon

PREACHED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 15TH, 1858,

BY THE REV. J. J. WEST, M.A.,

(Rector of Winchelsea, Sussex.)

AT CHRIST CHURCH, BLACKFRIARS ROAD, LONDON.

IN BEHALF OF THE CHRISTIAN BLIND RELIEF SOCIETY.

For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,—Philp. iii. 3.

If there is any solemn meaning in the office which I now occupy in this pulpit before you, it is, that I may be made and acknowledged a messenger to your souls from the God whom I serve. Ministers of the Gospel (and it is a solemn thought as I begin to speak, and find my own voice arresting the attention of the people before me), Ministers of the Gospel are either “the savour of death unto death,” or “the savour of life unto life,” just as God sees fit to use our instrumentality.

Now, in the words which you have heard me read, there are four specific points, and no man could have adopted these four points more feelingly or more experimentally than the great Apostle, who had himself formerly been such a thorough legal worker—a double-distilled Arminian. No man could have spoken so feelingly as the Apostle Paul upon the great subject that is embodied in the short text before us!—“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

I. First of all, “*For we are the circumcision.*” Well, now, my hearers, we are existing in a day of high towering profession, we are living in a day (distinguished from the generation before us) in which it is positively the fashion to profess something. But there is among the sects and parties of our day, one, and only one established believing people of God—“*We are the circumcision.*” Now, the Apostle had been rapping the heretics of his day. He guards the CHURCH in the verse preceding the one upon which I am attempting to preach, thus, “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision,” “dogs, evil workers, and concisionists!” and then he takes the first point in the text that I am speaking of, claiming for himself this great privilege,

"For we are the circumcision." Now, if we turn to a passage in the epistle to the church in Corinth, we shall find him saying, "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." And the verse before has this statement, "For, first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." Hence, out of the whole host of carnal professors, in order to bring out the true men and women, there must be divisions, there must be contentions. "I am not come to send peace on earth but a sword." And yet the Prince of Peace has his own kingdom, a kingdom not of this world, a kingdom composed of his own blood—bought people, and they that are "approved" must be each manifested amongst us. Thus, in the first point in the text before us, Paul speaks of a particular party, "*We are the circumcision.*" I think I need not dwell further upon that part of the subject, but go to the testing point, the testing, teaching, separating parts in the text before us.

II. "*Which worship God in the spirit.*" That word, which in our English is rendered "worship," has a great deal fuller force in the Greek. It is impossible in our barren English to give the full signification of it in the Greek. In the original it means to serve God, to be made honest in the profession of the Gospel, not a mere profession—distinguishing between carnal profession and the real possession of grace in a broken heart. "Which worship God in the spirit." Not a mere formalist, not a mere worker, but one whose heart has been arrested by the grace of God, to serve HIM. "God is a Spirit," says our Lord in the Gospel of John, "and they that worship him must worship Him in spirit, and in truth." "We are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit," and render him heart-service; not the mere chattering of a carnal tongue, but with a broken heart pouring out our desires unto the Lord as Hannah did. Eli thought that she was drunk; but as a worshipper of God, Hannah, as every other child of God does, poured out her soul unto the Lord. Do you know what that is? I ask you one by one. I wish to be as personal in the pulpit as I can be; I wish to say to you, with all the power of a Nathan "thou art the man," thou art the woman, to whom I speak. Do you know what it is, you Londoners? you professing people that are now so thronging this church to hear me preach I ask (and I will not be satisfied till your inmost conscience gives the answer—not to me but to God).—Do you know what it is to pour out your soul unto the Lord, for that is "worshipping HIM in spirit and in truth?" All the butterfly profession of our day is nothing but Popery in another form, whether it be in churches or in chapels or elsewhere. Nothing instances the reality of what I am speaking but the worshipping of God in the spirit, honestly, earnestly, with the cry in the soul pouring out your heart unto the Lord. Look at that expression "pouring out!" We know what it is to pour something out of a vessel. We know what it is to empty a vessel. I ask you solemnly then, do you know what it is to pour out your heart, to be emptied as it were of yourself—of every other thing—to go with all your cares and all your troubles, and anxieties and temptations unto God, like Hannah, who, when she wanted her Samuel poured out her soul unto the Lord? Well, that is only a little sketch of what I understand by the solemn expression of worshipping God in the spirit. Now, you know the heart is the thing that must serve God. I may be speaking here to several tried ones, and it is to you that we preachers are specially sent, when God does send us! Allow me to turn to a passage for your comfort. To whom was the Head of the church sent? Listen! "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon ME because HE hath anointed ME" (who is the ME there? Christ!)—"The Lord hath anointed ME to preach good tidings unto the meek"—There is the character!—"to bind up the broken-hearted"—there is the character!—"to proclaim liberty to the captives"—there is the character!—"and the opening of the prison to them that are bound!" Now, if you have not been shut up in prison you do not value liberty. Look at the characters here—meek ones, broken-hearted,

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captives, prisoners! "Worshipping God in the spirit." You know that God must ~~again~~ ^{begin} the work! It is the fashion with professors now to think that they must begin with God. But the members of the true church realise the fact that unless God begins with them they will all go to hell together. That is plain English and there can be no mistake about it. In the very epistle I am preaching from, we have these words, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." And who could so feelingly realise this as the once obstinate, Christ-hating, Saul of Tarsus—he who had been such a stickler to the very bone for mere legal forms and ceremonies—afterwards the great Archbishop to the Church of the Gentiles. We have his own statement recorded in the context to this fact—but what I wish (in preaching and bringing before you the fact of "worshipping God in the spirit") is this—that I may stir up your minds, and that God may honour my pulpit service this evening, by sending away every hearer (men, women, and children, if it be now his will), uncomfortable, dissatisfied with self, wretched and miserable, till you get the evidential test in your own souls that God has begun the work in you! It is God that must turn up the fallow ground; he must put in the plough and the ploughshare, and turn the sinner upside down. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O, God! Thou wilt not despise." God begins with the heart. But what are the professors of the day? A valued brother minister of mine, with his peculiar keenness, calls the professors of our time "crane-necked professors!" Now the crane is a bird that has a very long neck—a long distance between the head and the heart; and mere head work will not do for the eternal God. When God begins with a sinner, and means to make him worship the Lord in the spirit, he gives him a "new heart and a new spirit." I have frequently, to those whom I may call my special London flock, at All Saints Church, in Spicer-street, insisted on the very important fact that there is no such thing as a change of heart. There may be some here, perhaps, who may be surprised when I say God never changes the heart. In the rubbishy publications of the day, you constantly find a change of heart insisted on. There is no such thing. The carnal heart is never changed. (Rom. 8. 7.) There is no such thing as a change of heart mentioned in the Bible. It is, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." If there was a change of heart, there would be a ground for the false doctrine of perfection in the flesh—and in that case there would be no conflict. The fact, too, of a new heart and a new spirit being given is the beginning of exercise—the cause of soul conflict. And here I will ask my exercised brother and sister, whether it is not one of the sweetest tests of our discipleship, that we know what conflict means. Conflict day after day, and hour after hour, which only the honest professor knows. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the thing that ye would." Again, I say, how does Paul speak in his epistle to the Romans of the carnal mind as enmity against God? "For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "The old Adam," says Augustus Toplady, "never can be the saint," you will never make the old Adam better, you may try to patch him up, but it is of no use. You men of London are not content with patching up old houses, but you pull down the old tumble-down houses and build up new ones. So it is with my master. It is the spirituality of the new heart that alone can serve God. But you know that in your own natural man you have a continual tendency to serve the devil. But the clock tells me that with four divisions in the text, I must pass on and proceed.

III. Now I shall take the fourth before I take the third point—"No confidence in the flesh." My dear hearers, I know nothing so important as that which teaches the broken-hearted believer not to trust in himself. Do you know what the flesh is? Do you know what it is made up of? Know you not every day the motions of sin in your members? It is only the exercised Christian man that knows *what sin really is*. "By the law is the knowledge of sin," and that is in its spirituality. "I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not

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covet." And what does the law work? "Wrath," damnation. It has been well said, "everything out of Christ and everything about of Christ is death, and hell, and damnation; and everything in Christ is life, peace, mercy, pardon, love." Now the Apostle had no confidence in the flesh; what a blessed point to be brought to! I could refer you to several passages on this subject. There is a wonderful one in Jeremiah: "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man." Especially is that man cursed that trusts in himself. Self is the great monster after all; the greatest enemy that you and I have. It is one of the greatest mercies that God grants to a sinner, to *be kept guarded against self*, to have self kept down! As Kent says:—

"The law revealed my desperate state
And down my Babel fell."

What does the Apostle say on this subject—as to confidence in the flesh? "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day; of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church." Do you know what persecution is, my brother? Do you know what it is to be persecuted for the Gospel? Are you a member of a carnal family? Is there a mark upon you? (I pause for your answer!) If there is no opposition, there is no GRACE. When grace is given to a man, God allows other people to persecute and oppose him. There is a blessing in the written word, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." No cross, no crown. No persecution, no communion with Jesus!! Kent says of the Church:—

"When foiled by temptation she goes,
And makes the ATONEMENT her plea,
There pardon eternally flows,
And LOVE wipes her sorrows away;
And when with her pardon she's blest,
Communion with JESUS she gains,
No longer a sinner distressed,
For on her Beloved she leans."

Do you know that leaning spirit? "Concerning zeal, persecuting the Church"—touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. That was Paul's state once, till grace opened his blind eyes. My hearers! I would not dwell upon the dark side of the picture. I believe there must be those before me who know something about the trials of the flesh. Oh! what are you and I made of? Is it no comfort to the harassed people of God to read in the Book of the special characters whom God has saved? Let us take, for instance, the sample of the Church! Look at David! look at Peter! look at Manasseh! look at Mary!—all saved sinners! Now I will not allow any man justly to charge me with preaching a doctrine that would hold out a handle to sin. I dare you to charge me with Antinomian heresy! but I speak to comfort the flock. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" "God forbid!" But, my hearers, I preach to encourage the honest, broken-hearted people of God, and therefore I say if David was pardoned, and Peter was pardoned, and Manasseh was pardoned, and Mary was pardoned, and Rahab was pardoned—you and I, sinners by nature and sinners by practice, if born from above, MAY have a good hope through grace. Christ's blood "cleanseth us from all sin," and to use the thrilling words of Toplady, "even those who died before Christ came were accepted of God, upon the credit of that great sacrifice that afterwards was made upon the cross." You men in London know what credit is! These sinners, then, were saved upon the credit of the price that was afterwards to be paid down upon the cross. I will take a notorious instance—that of Rahab! What was it amidst the devastation of Jericho (described in the Bible as the accursed city)—what was it that saved her house, when others were levelled to the ground, under the power of the enemy? It was the scarlet thread pendant from Rahab's window! Have you got the scarlet thread? Is the blood the token on your soul and in your

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conscience? Are you worshipping God in the spirit now as I preach the Gospel to you? You must have evidence! What is the evidence that you are saved men? Is it the blood upon your soul? Are you looking unto Jesus? I quoted in Spicer-street sometime ago what I got from an account of a sermon preached by the Bishop of London. The crowd of poor people in Bethnal Green were astonished to hear a bishop preach. He exhorted them with a Scotchman's feelings, to "look up"—to look unto Jesus. Now, my hearers, I tell every man now hearing me—every man on whom God may have looked down first—every man and every woman here that has a little hope that God has begun the work in them—I tell you to look up to Jesus; I tell you to look out of self. Oh that monster, self! How shall I describe it? "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies"—everything that is vile and bad comes out of self. But listen to the description of the new man in Solomon's Song—"Thou art all fair my love—there is no spot in thee." Now, are we brought to that wise and God-taught experience not to trust self—to have "no confidence in the flesh." That is the point! "We are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." You know Peter's history. You know how self-confident he was!—"Though all men deny Thee yet will not I." How he boasted and professed his allegiance to Christ. The Lord gently reproved his boasting, and told him that before the cock crew twice he should deny Him thrice. Now, do you not think that that instance of Peter is recorded in the Bible in love to all God's people, in every time-state of the Church, in order to caution God's elect against self-confidence. Remember Peter made his profession from the purest and most devoted love to Christ—he was at the moment sincere in every word he said—he declared with devotional affection to his Lord, "Though I should die with Thee yet will I not deny THEE," and yet mark the frailty of man! he was the very one to do IT!! the very first to be guilty of the very crime he professed such abhorrence of—and even the servant girl in Pilate's palace made the Apostle a coward—and those startling words, "I do not know the man!!" show that we are in ourselves nothing but weakness, vileness, and sinfulness—that we are only strong in Another's strength, and only safe as we are kept upheld and guarded!

Does not this read a lesson, my hearers, of caution to ourselves!—of carefulness, that our dependence should be, must be, simply upon the eternal God—and teach us to cry, as David did, that practical and blessed prayer, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe, and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually?" But we know what the flesh is! I own I can find very very few that are fully aware of self. I believe it takes a great deal of schooling, nay, a man must be at school all his life long to find out truly and fully what self is. The Apostle's test here is having "NO confidence in the flesh."

IV. Now, having thus far glanced at that part, I proceed to consider the other point in the text before me—"*Rejoicing in Christ Jesus.*" Now, where is our rejoicing, where is our joy, where is our boasting? David said, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad." And who is JESUS CHRIST? who is that great and glorious BEING in whom the Apostle here states that he rejoices? "What think ye of Christ?" Do you know WHO HE is? Are you sound upon the doctrine of Jesus Christ? Are you sound in the great truth of the INCARNATION, so blessedly set forth and embodied in our Athanasian Creed?—"Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly" (mark the word) "the INCARNATION of OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST." Are you sure that you are sound upon that great and essential doctrine! an incarnate Christ, God and man in one, Jehovah Jesus, "God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds, and man of the substance of his mother, born in the world; perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting?" and so—God and man is one Christ! What was heralded of Him before the Virgin gave birth to her infant boy? "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins."

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What a fact to preach to you men and women here, or anywhere else, that the Eternal God arranged before all worlds that the salvation of the Church should be accomplished and finished by the birth, the work, the death and resurrection, ascension and mediation of our blessed Lord. Oh! my hearers, what a thought! And may I not with advantage ask every man now hanging upon my tongue, What think ye, what know ye, what believe ye of Christ? Do you know what it is to have communion with Him? My hearers, I speak it reverently, but I speak it firmly, that there is one thing which God the Father and God the Holy Ghost cannot do; I say that that God who can do everything cannot do one thing! He, who is the "Almighty" God, who made the world out of nothing, and who now holds everything (to use a Scripture term) "in the hollow of his hand," that Holy Jehovah, the Father, and the Spirit—the Father and the Spirit cannot do what the Son can do—cannot feel and sympathise with all the infirmities and all the temptations of a sinner; that is the thing that can only be understood by the "Man of Sorrows," the ONE who was acquainted with grief; for, to use Scripture to prove what I say, "In that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." And I believe this fully, that there is not a single position in which any of His own members can be placed, of trial, of suffering, or of the keenest distress, but the Man, Christ Jesus, can and does sympathise with them and feel for them, in order to take every case of theirs and present it before the Father, Son, and Spirit, as the triune God, and so relieve His tried and tempted child. This is Christ; and this is what He is to His people; and He is the Head of the mystical body, the Church! Christ and the Church are one. What was His prayer? "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee!" That is Church union; there is none other. We hear a great deal said about this union and the other; but real Church union consists in having Christ as the Head; union with Him, and through Him, and for His sake with each other. "All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." "Rejoicing in Christ!" Why, what other subject is worth having joy in? Look at your own pleasures; they are all transitory. Look at the things that, generally speaking, occupy your time and attention here; they are gone in a day. Fleeting! perishing!! transitory!!! But look at the reality. Do we know what it is to be interested in this petition of our Lord—"Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me, for thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." There is the date; as old Kent says—

"Loved with the dateless love of God."

It is dateless! "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Do you desire to rejoice in this blessed Saviour? What will you do in the dying hour, when nature is fast running down? as the sand glass drops out its sands, and as the last dust goes, so will your's. What will you do in the dying hour? Rejoice? You may not get so high as that—but you may have a hope in Him! Now I wish to go to the lowest scale of Christian evidence! If we are raised no higher than to have a hope in him, that is a token for good. It is the sweet simile of our Lord himself—"A woman when she is in travail, hath sorrow because her hour is come."—There is a picture of a believer in trial.—"A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world: and ye now, therefore, have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." You may lose all your earthly joys; you may be ruined in every sense of the word on earth; but nothing can take away the joy of the Lord! Whatever befalls you in the way of trial, temptation, or anything else, if you have only hope in HIM, that will end in joy! We have nothing in ourselves to rejoice in, but everything to pain us. Our joy is in another, even in the MAN that died for us! What a wonderful faith! When Philip was sent into Samaria, what did he do? He preached Christ to the people; and not only did he preach as I am now,

I trust, preaching Christ in this great city and in this church, but he was afterwards sent to a desert place. Philip found himself alone in the desert. He had before been preaching in the crowded city. Presently he sees a chariot, and the Holy Spirit of God arrests the attention of his servant, and commands him to join himself to that chariot—there he finds an Ethiopian peer—one of great authority, under Candace, Ethiopia's Queen, who was reading in his chariot that great chapter in the 53rd of Isaiah—a chapter full of a crucified Saviour—the chapter in the Old Testament that might be called "The John of the Prophecies." We find him reading that memorable passage—"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer so opened he not his mouth; in His humiliation His judgment was taken away and who shall declare His generation, for His life is taken from the earth." And the eunuch answered Philip and said:—"I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this—of himself or of some other man?" See how ignorant he was then. Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus; and after he baptised him we are told that the eunuch saw Philip no more, and he went on his way rejoicing, realising the very fact that I am endeavouring to insist upon to you that a sinner who savingly and really catches a glimpse of a crucified and risen Saviour must go on his way REJOICING! And I can feel a real joy in my heart, now, that he has enabled me to preach him I trust to the people assembled here, and because he has made me a sensible sinner—deeply feeling my own sin, and led me to the foot of the cross of his dear Son, to seek the pardon of all my sin. Oh! that I may now have so preached that the subject may drop into your hearts—that God may make me such an instrument to your souls that you may go out of the door of this church, as the Ethiopian went on his way—rejoicing in Christ, THE SAVIOUR! I hope that what I have said in weakness may be clothed with power, and be so blest as to be the means of sifting this full church—of sifting the crowds now before me—of sifting you crowded together in these pews and in these aisles—aye, and searching the man in the pulpit too to know whether you and I are of the *one sect* that shall get safe to Heaven. We are "the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." I find at times, my hearers, when the preaching is over, that the text is sometimes made a great blessing. As you go home to-night, or, to-morrow, it may be, in the midst of your business the grace of God may arrest you, and the text you have heard to-night may occur to your minds, and you may ask yourselves—"Am I one of the true Church of God (whether a Churchman or a Nonconformist); am I a circumciser? and do I know that in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

The particular and special subject that has brought me to-night into this pulpit, is the same as that which I advocated here two years ago from the spot I now stand in—the Christian Blind Society. I believe that appeal was not then without a blessing. I believe, without any boasting, that my feeble advocacy on that occasion did, under God, tend to benefit the society. I am a bad beggar, but it will be sufficient for me to tell you that the object that has brought us together is to aid the Christian Blind Society. Now, if among those that are almonised by that society, there be any of the household of faith, or if they be all the children of God (and that is a point between God and their own souls) remember the word—that if you give a cup of cold water only to them "because ye belong to Christ," or inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren (said Christ), "ye have done it unto Me." Now, surely I have no occasion to say a word more. Whilst, therefore, I plead for the blind, that their temporal and carnal necessities may be supplied; and while I ask you to give a little of that gold and silver that is not your own (for "the silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine," saith the Lord of Hosts), listen to what God has done for you, if you are one of his people, and are now open-eyed to see Christ as your all—What did he give Christ for? To open the eyes of the blind. He may have done so in one single

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instance here to-night! Who can tell but that I may have been the instrument now of opening the eyes of one sinner to know what he never knew before. "To open the blind eyes—to bring out the prisoners from the prison—them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. I am the Lord, that is MY NAME, and My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." Oh! He is a jealous God—His glory He will not give to another—He will Himself have it all. Allow me, then, to place this society before you—may God enable you to help its cause. But above all! beyond all!! may you know what it is to have the eye of the soul opened to see *yourselves* verily guilty, and tracing your interest in the blood of Christ, to see your sins all atoned for, and *yourselves* members of His mystical body. May you be enabled to come up to the standard I have now feebly set forth before you of what THE CHURCH of GOD really is, and be satisfied with nothing less than Christ crucified set up in a broken heart. "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." May God command the blessing, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 23, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed."—Psalm xxxiv. 5.

FROM the connection we are to understand the pronoun "him" as referring to the word "Lord" in the preceding verse. "They looked unto the Lord Jehovah, and were lightened." But no man ever yet looked to Jehovah God, as he is in himself, and found any comfort in him, for "our God is a consuming fire." An absolute God, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, can afford no comfort whatever to a troubled heart. We *may* look to him, and we shall be blinded, for the light of Godhead is insufferable, and as mortal eye cannot fix its gaze upon the sun, no human intellect could ever look unto God, and find light, for the brightness of God would strike the eye of the mind with eternal blindness. The only way in which we can see God is through the Mediator Jesus Christ.

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find,—"

God shrouded and veiled in the manhood,—there we can with steady gaze behold him, for so he cometh down to us, and our poor finite intelligence can understand and lay hold upon him. I shall therefore use my text this morning, and I think very legitimately, in reference to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—"They looked unto him, and were lightened;" for when we look at God, as revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord, and behold the Godhead as it is apparent in the Incarnate Man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified by Pontius Pilate, we do see that which enlightens the mind, and casts rays of comfort into our awakened heart.

And now this morning, I shall first invite you, in order to illustrate my text, to *look to Jesus Christ in his life on earth*, and I hope there are some of you who will be lightened by that. We shall then *look to him on his cross*. Afterwards we shall *look to him in his resurrection*. We shall *look to him in his intercession*; and lastly, we shall *look to him in his second coming*; and it may be, as with faithful eye we look upon him, the verse shall be fulfilled in our experience, which is the best proof of a truth, when we prove it to be true in our own hearts, We shall "look unto him" and we shall "be lightened."

I. First, then, we shall LOOK TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN HIS LIFE. And here the troubled saint will find the most to enlighten him. In the example, in the patience, in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, there are stars of glory to cheer the midnight darkness of the sky of your tribulation. Come hither, ye children of God, and whatever now are your distresses, whether they be temporal or spiritual, you shall, in the life of Jesus Christ and his sufferings, find sufficient to cheer and comfort you, if the Holy Spirit shall now open your eyes to look unto him. Perhaps I have among my congregation, indeed I am sure I have, some who are plunged in the depths of poverty. You are the children of toil; with much sweat of your brow you eat your bread; the heavy yoke of oppression galls your neck; perhaps at this time you are suffering the very extremity of hunger; you are

pinched with famine, and though in the house of God, your body complains, for you feel that you are brought very low. Look unto Him, thou poor distressed brother in Jesus; look unto Him, and be lightened.

"Why dost thou complain of want or distress,
Temptation or pain?—he told thee no less;
The heirs of salvation, we know from his word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."

See him there! Forty days he fasts and he hungers. See him again; he treads the weary way, and at last all athirst he sits upon the curb of the well of Sychar; and he the Lord of glory, he who holds the clouds in the hollow of his hand, said to a woman, "Give me to drink." And shall the servant be above his master, and the disciple above his Lord? If he suffered hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, O heir of poverty, be of good cheer; in all these thou hast fellowship with Jesus; therefore be comforted, and look unto him and be lightened.

Perhaps your trouble is of another caste. You have come here to-day smarting from the forked tongue of that adder—slander. Your character, though pure and spotless before God, seems to be lost before man; for that foul slanderous thing hath sought to take away that which is dearer to you than life itself, your character, your good fame; and you are this day filled with bitterness and made drunken with wormwood, because you have been accused of crimes which your soul loathes. Come, thou child of mourning, this indeed is a heavy blow; poverty is like Solomon's whip, but slander is like the scorpion of Rehoboam; to fall into the depths of poverty is to have it on thy little finger, but to be slandered is to have it on thy loins. But in all this thou mayest have comfort from Christ. Come and look unto him and be lightened. The King of kings was called a Samaritan; they said of him that he had a devil and was mad; and yet infinite wisdom dwelt in him, though he was charged with madness. And was he not ever pure and holy? And did they not call him a drunken man and a wine-bibber? He was his Father's glorious Son; and yet they said he did cast out devils through Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Come, poor slandered one; wipe that tear away! "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" If they had honoured him, then might you have expected that they would honour you; but inasmuch as they mocked him and took away his glory and his character, blush not to bear the reproach and the shame, for he is with you, carrying his cross before you, and that cross was heavier than yours. Look, then, unto him and be lightened.

But I hear another say, "Ah! but my trouble is worse than either of those. I am not to-day smarting from slander, nor am I burdened with penury; but, sir, the hand of God lies heavy upon me; he hath brought my sins to my remembrance; he hath taken away the bright shining of his countenance; once I did believe in him, and could 'read my title clear to mansions in the skies,' but to-day I am brought very low; he hath lifted me up and cast me down; like a wrestler, he has elevated me that he might dash me to the ground with the greater force; my bones are sore vexed, and my spirit within me is melted with anguish." Come, my tried brother, "Look unto him, and be lightened." No longer groan over thine own miseries, but come thou with me and look unto him, if thou canst. Seest thou the garden of Olives? It is a cold night, and the ground is crisp beneath thy feet, for the frost is hard; and there, in the gloom of the olive garden, kneels thy Lord. Listen to him. Canst thou understand the music of his groans, the meaning of his sighs? Sure, thy griefs are not so heavy as his were, when drops of blood were forced through his skin, and a bloody sweat did stain the ground! Say, are thy wrastlings greater than his? If, then, he had to combat with the powers of darkness, expect to do so also; and look thou to him in the last solemn hour of his extremity, and hear him say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And when thou hast heard that, murmur not, as though some strange thing had happened to thee, as if thou hast to join in his "lama sabbathani," and hast to sweat some few drops of his bloody sweat. "They looked unto him, and were lightened."

But, possibly I may have here some one who is much persecuted by man. "Ah!" saith one, "I cannot practice my religion with comfort. My friends have turned against me; I am mocked, and jeered, and reviled, for Christ's sake." Come, Christian, be not afraid of all this, but, "look unto him, and be lightened." Remember how they persecuted him. Oh! think thou of the shame and spitting, the plucking

off the hair, the reviling of the soldiers; think thou of that fearful march through the streets, when every man did hoot him, and when even they that were crucified with him did revile him. Hast thou been worse treated than he? Methinks this is enough to make you gird your armour on once more. Why need you blush to be as much dishonoured as your Master? It was this thought that cheered the martyrs of old. They that fought the bloody fight, knew they should win the blood-red crown—that ruby crown of martyrdom; therefore they did endure, as seeing him who is invisible; for this ever cheered and comforted them. They remembered him who had, “endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, that they might not be weary or faint in their minds.” They “resisted unto blood, striving against sin;” for they knew their Master had done the same, and his example did comfort them. I am persuaded, beloved brothers and sisters, that if we looked more to Christ, our troubles would not become anything like so black. In the darkest night, looking to Christ, will clear the ebony sky; when the darkness seems thick, like that of Egypt, darkness that might be felt, like solid pillars of ebony, even then, like a bright lightning flash, as bright but not as transient, will a look to Jesus prove. One glimpse at him, may well suffice for all our toils, while on the road. Cheered by his voice, nerved by his strength, we are prepared to do and suffer, even as he did, to the death, if he will be with us, even unto the end. This, then, is our first point. We trust that those of you, who are weary Christians, will not forget to “look unto him, and be lightened.”

II. And now I have to invite you to a more dreary sight; but, strange it is, just as the sight becomes more black, so to us, does it grow more bright. The more deeply the Saviour dived into the depths of misery, the brighter were the pearls which he brought up—the greater his griefs, the greater our joys, and the deeper his dishonour, the brighter our glories. Come, then—and this time I shall ask poor, doubting, trembling sinners and saints, to come with me,—come ye now to Calvary’s cross. There, on the summit of that little hill, outside the gates of Jerusalem, where common criminals were ordinarily put to death—the Tyburn of Jerusalem, the Old Bailey of that city, where criminals were executed—there stand three crosses; the centre one is reserved for one who is reputed to be the greatest of criminals. See there! They have nailed him to the cross. It is the Lord of life and glory, before whose feet angels delight to pour fall vials of glory. They have nailed him to the cross: he hangs there in mid-heaven, dying, bleeding; he is thirsty, and he cries. They bring him vinegar, and thrust it into his mouth. He is in suffering, and he needs sympathy, but they mock at him, and they say, “He saved others; himself he cannot save.” They misquote his words; they challenge him now to destroy the temple, and build it in three days; while the very thing was being fulfilled, they taunt him with his powerlessness to accomplish it. Now see him, ere the veil is drawn over agonies too black for eye to behold. See him now! Was ever face marred like that face? Was ever heart so big with agony? And did eyes ever seem so pregnant with the fire of suffering, as those great wells of fiery agony? Come and behold him, come and look to him now. The sun is eclipsed, refusing to behold him! earth quakes; the dead rise; the horrors of his sufferings have startled earth itself,

“He dies! the friend of sinners dies;”

And we invite you to look to this scene that you may be lightened. What are your doubts this morning? Whatever they be, they can find a kind and fond solution here, by looking at Christ on the cross. You have come here, perhaps, doubting God’s mercy; look to Christ upon the cross, and can you doubt it then? If God were not full of mercy, and plenteous in his compassion, would he have given his Son to bleed and die? Think you, that a Father would rend his darling from his heart and nail him to a tree, that he might suffer an ignominious death for our sakes, and yet be hard, merciless, and without pity? God forbid the impious thought! There must be mercy in the heart of God, or else there had never been a cross on Calvary.

But do you doubt God’s power to save? Are you saying in yourself this morning, “How can he forgive so great a sinner as I am?” Oh! look there, sinner, look there, to the great atonement made, to the utmost ransom paid. Dost thou think that that blood has not an efficacy to pardon and to justify. True, without that cross it had been an unanswerable question,—“How can God be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly?” But see there the bleeding substitute! and know that God has accepted his sufferings as an equivalent for the woes of all believers; and

then let thy spirit dare to think, if it can, that there is not sufficient in the blood of Christ, to enable God to vindicate his justice, and yet to have mercy upon sinners.

But I know you say, "My doubt is not of his general mercy, nor of his power to forgive, but of his willingness to forgive *me*." Now I beseech you, by him that liveth and was dead, do not this morning look into your own heart in order to find an answer to that difficulty; do not now sit down and look at your sins; they have brought you into the danger—they cannot bring you out of it. The best answer you will ever get, is at the foot of the cross. Sit down, when you get home this morning, for half-an-hour, in quiet contemplation, sit at the foot of the cross, and contemplate the dying Saviour, and I will defy you then to say, "I doubt his love to me." Looking at Christ begets faith. You cannot believe on Christ except as you see him, and if you look to him you will learn that he is able to save; you will learn his loving-kindness; and you cannot doubt him after having once beheld him. Dr. Watts says,

"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world would *love* him too;"

and I am sure it is quite true if I read it another way—

"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world would *trust* him too."

Oh, that you would look to him now, and your doubts would soon be removed; for there is nothing that so speedily kills all doubt and fear, as a look into the loving eye of the bleeding, dying Lord. "Ah," says one, "but my doubts are concerning my own salvation in this respect; I cannot be so holy as I want to be." "I have tried very much," says one, "to get rid of all my sins, and I cannot; I have laboured to live without wicked thoughts, and without unholy acts, and I still find that my heart is 'deceitful above all things;' and I wander from God. Surely I cannot be saved, while I am like this?" Stay! Look to him, and be lightened. What business have you to be looking to yourself? The first business of a sinner is not with himself, but with Christ. Your business is to come to Christ; sick, weary, and soul-diseased, and ask Christ to cure you. You are not to be your own physician, and then go to Christ, but just as you are; the only salvation for you is to trust implicitly, simply, nakedly, on Christ. As I sometimes put it—make Christ the only pillar of your hope, and never seek to buttress or prop him up. "He is able, he is willing." All he asks of you is just to trust him. As for your good works, they shall come afterwards. They are after-fruits of the Spirit: but your first business is not to do, but to believe. Look to Jesus, and put your only trust in him. "Oh," another cries, "Sir, I am afraid I do not feel my need of a Saviour as I ought." Looking to yourselves again! all looking to yourselves you see! This is all wrong. Our doubts and fears all arise from this cause—we will turn our eyes the wrong way—just look to the cross again, just as the poor thief did when he was dying; he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Do the same. You may tell him if you please, that you do not feel your need of him as you ought; you may put this among your other sins, that you fear you have not a right sense of your great and enormous guilt. You may add to all your confessions, this cry, "Lord help me to confess my sins better; help me to feel them more penitently." But recollect, it is not your repentance that saves you; it is just the blood of Christ, streaming from his hands, and feet, and side. Oh! I beseech you by him whose servant I am, this morning turn your eyes to the cross of Christ. There he hangs this day; he is lifted up in your midst. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so is the Son of Man lifted up to-day in your eyes, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have everlasting life.

And you children of God, I turn to you, for you have your doubts too. Would you get rid of them? Would you rejoice in the Lord with faith unmoved and confidence unshaken? Then look to Jesus; look again to him and you shall be lightened. I know not how it is with you my beloved friends, but I very often find myself in a doubting frame of mind; and it seems to be a question whether I have any love to Christ or not. And despite the fact that some laugh at the hymn, it is a hymn that I am forced to sing:—

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his, or am I not?"

And really I am convinced that every Christian has his doubts at times, and that the people who do not doubt are just the people that ought to doubt; for he who never doubts about his state perhaps may do so when it is too late. I knew a man who said he never had a doubt for thirty years. I told him that I knew a person who never had a doubt about him for thirty years. "How is that?" said he "that is strange." He thought it a compliment. I said, "I knew a man who never had a doubt about you for thirty years. He knew you were always the most confounded hypocrite he ever met; he had no doubt about you." But this man had no doubt about himself: he was a chosen child of God, a great favourite of the Most High; he loved the doctrine of Election, wrote it on his very brow; and yet he was the hardest driver and the most cruel oppressor to the poor I ever met with, and when brought to poverty himself, he might very frequently be seen rolling through the streets. And this man had not a doubt for thirty years; and yet the best people are always doubting. Some of those who are just living outside the gates of heaven, are afraid of being cast into hell after all; while those people who are on the high road to the pit are not the least afraid. However, if you would get rid of your doubts once more, turn to Christ. You know what Dr. Carey had put on his tomb-stone—just these words, for they were his comfort;—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
Into Christ's arms I fall;
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

Remember what that eminent Scotch divine said, when he was dying. Some one said to him, "What, are you dying now?" Said he, "I am just gathering all my good works up together, and I am throwing them all overboard; and I am lashing myself to the plank of free grace, and I hope to swim to glory on it." So do you do; every day keep your eye only on Christ; and so long as your eye is single, your whole body must and shall be full of light. But if you once look cross-eyed, first to yourself and then to Christ, your whole body shall be full of darkness. Remember, then, Christian, to hie away to the cross. When that great black dog of hell is after you, away to the cross! Go where the sheep goes when he is molested by the dog; go to the shepherd. The dog is afraid of the shepherd's crook; you need not be afraid of it, it is one of the things that shall comfort you. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Away to the cross, my brothers! away to the cross, if thou wouldst get rid of thy doubts. Certain I am, that if we lived more with Jesus, were more like Jesus, and trusted more to Jesus, doubts and fears would be very scarce and rare things, and we should have as little to complain of them as the first emigrants in Australia had to complain of thistles; for they found none there, and none would have been there if they had not been carried there. If we live simply by faith on the cross of Christ, we live in a land where there are no thistles; but if we will live on self, we shall have plenty of thistles and thorns, and briers, and nettles growing there. "They looked unto him, and were lightened."

III. And now I invite you to a glorious scene—CHRIST'S RESURRECTION. Come you here, and look at him, as the old serpent bruises his heel!

"He dies! the friend of sinners dies,
And Salem's daughters weep around."

He was wrapped in his grave clothes and put into his grave, and there he slept three days and nights. And on the first day of the week, he, who could not be holden by the bands of death, and whose flesh did not see corruption, neither did his soul abide in Hades—he arose from the dead. In vain the bands that swaddled him; he unfolded them by himself, and by his own living power wrapped them in perfect order, and laid them in their place. In vain the stone and the seal; the angel appeared and rolled away the stone, and forth the Saviour came. In vain the guards and watchmen; for in terror they fled far away, and he rose the conqueror over death—the first-fruits of them that slept. By his own power and might, he came again to life. I see among my congregation, not a few wearing the black weeds of sorrow. You have lost, some of you, the dearest of your earthly relatives. There are others here, who, I doubt not, are under the constant fear of death. You are all your lifetime subject to bondage, because you are thinking upon the groans, and dying strife, which fall upon men, when they near the river Jordan. Come, come, I beseech you,

ye weeping and timid spirits, behold Jesus Christ risen ! For remember, this is a great truth—"Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." And the verse of our song just embodies it :—

"What though our inbred sins require
Our flesh to see the dust,
Yet as the Lord our Saviour rose,
So all his followers must."

There widow; weep no longer for your husband, if he died in Jesus. See the Master he is risen from the dead; no spectre is he. In the presence of his disciples he eats a piece of broiled fish and part of an honeycomb. No spirit is he; for he saith, "Handle me and see; a spirit hath not flesh and blood as ye see me have." That was a real resurrection. And learn then, beloved, when you weep, to restrain your sorrows; for thy loved ones *shall* live again. Not only shall their spirits live, but their bodies too.

"Corruption, earth, and worms,
Do but refine this flesh;
At the archangel's sounding trump,
We put it on afresh."

Oh! think not that the worm has eaten up your children, your friends, your husband, your father, your aged parents—true, the worms seem to have devoured them. Oh! what is the worm after all, but the filter through which our poor filthy flesh must go? For in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, we shall be raised incorruptible, and the living shall be changed; you shall see the eye that just now has been closed, and you shall look on it again, you shall again grasp the hand that just now felt motionless at the side. You shall kiss the lips that just now were clay-cold, and white, and you shall hear again the voice that is silent in the tomb. They shall live again. And you that fear death—why fear to die? Jesus died before you, and he passed through the iron gates, and as he passed through them before you, he will come and meet you. Jesus who lives can

"Make the dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are."

Why should you weep? for Jesus rose from the dead; so shall you. Be of good cheer and confidence. You are not lost when you are put into the tomb; you are but seed sown to ripen against the eternal harvest. Your spirit mounts to God; your body slumbers for awhile to be quickened into eternal life. It cannot be quickened except it die; but when it dies it shall receive a new life; it shall not be destroyed. "They looked to him, and were lightened." Oh! this is a precious thing to look to—a risen Saviour. I know of nothing that can lift our spirits higher than a true view of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We have not lost any friends then; they have gone before. We shall not die ourselves; we shall seem to die, but we shall begin to live; for it is written

"He lives to die; he dies to live;
He lives to die no more."

May that be the lot of each one of us!

IV. And with the greatest possible brevity, I invite you to LOOK AT JESUS CHRIST ASCENDING INTO HEAVEN. After forty days, he takes his disciples to the hill, and while he discourses with them, on a sudden he mounts upward; and he is separated from them, and a cloud receives him into glory. Perhaps I may be allowed a little poetical license if I try to picture that which occurred after he ascended into the clouds. The angels came from heaven—

"They brought his chariot from on high,
To bear him to his throne;
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
The glorious work is done."

I doubt not, that with matchless triumph he ascended the hill of light and went to the celestial city, and when he neared the portals of that great metropolis of the universe, the angels shouted, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors," and the bright spirits from burning battlements, cried out,

"Who is this King of Glory—who?" And the answer came, "the Lord mighty in battle, and the Lord of Hosts; he is the King of Glory." And then both they upon the walls, and they who walk with the chariot join the song once more, and with one mighty sea of music, beating its melodious waves against the gates of heaven and forcing them open, the strain is heard, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in"—and in he went. And at his feet the angelic hosts all cast their crowns, and forth came the blood-washed and met him, not casting roses at his feet, as we do at the feet of conquerors in our streets, but casting immortal flowers, imperishable wreaths of honour that never can decay; while again, again, again, the heavens did ring with this melody, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father—unto him be glory for ever and ever." And all the saints and all the angels said, "Amen." Now, look ye here, Christian, here is your comfort; Jesus Christ won the victory, and he ascended to his throne of glory. You are fighting to-day, and wrestling with spiritual enemies, not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers; you are at war to-day, and mayhap the enemy has thrust sore at you, and you have been ready to fall; it is a marvel to you, that you have not turned your back in the day of battle, for you have often feared lest you should be made to fly like a coward from the field. But tremble not, your Master was more than conqueror, and so shall you be. The day is coming when with splendour less than his, but yet the same in its measure, you too shall pass the gates of bliss; when you are dying, angels shall meet you in the mid-stream, and when your blood is cooling with the cold current, then shall your heart be warming with another stream, a stream of light and heat from the great fountain of all joy, and you shall stand on the other side of Jordan, and angels shall meet you clothed in their immaculate garments, they shall attend you up the hill of light, and they shall chant the praise of Jesus, and hail you as another trophy of his power. And when you enter the gates of heaven, you shall be met with Christ your Master, who will say to you—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Then will you feel that you are sharing in his victory, as once you shared in his struggles and his war. Fight on, Christian, your glorious Captain has won a great victory, and has secured for you in one and the same victory, a standard that never yet was stained with defeat, though often dipped in the blood of the slain.

V. And now once more, "Look unto him, and be lightened." See there he sits in heaven, he has led captivity captive, and now sits at the right hand of God, forever making intercession for us. Can your faith picture him to-day? Like a great high priest of old, he stands with outstretched arms: there is majesty in his mien, for he is no mean cringing suppliant. He does not beat his breast, nor cast his eyes upon the ground, but with authority he pleads enthroned in glory now. There on his head is the bright shining mitre of his priesthood, and look you, on his breast are glittering the precious stones whereon the names of his elect are everlastingly engraven; hear him as he pleads, hear you not what it is?—is that your prayer that he is mentioning before the throne? The prayer that this morning you offered ere you came to the house of God, Christ is now offering before his Father's throne. The vow which just now you uttered when you said, "Have pity and have mercy,"—he is now uttering there. He is the Altar and the Priest, and with his own sacrifice he perfumes our prayers. And yet, mayhap, you have been at prayer many a day, and had no answer; poor weeping suppliant, thou hast sought the Lord and he hath not heard thee, or at least not answered thee to thy soul's delight; thou hast cried unto him, but the heavens have been as brass, and he hath shut out thy prayer, thou art full of darkness and heaviness on account of this, "Look to him, and be lightened." If thou dost not succeed, he will; if thy intercession be unnoticed his cannot be passed away; if thy prayers can be like water spilt on a rock which cannot be gathered up, yet his prayers are not like that, he is God's Son, he pleads and must prevail; God cannot refuse his own Son what he now asks, he who once bought mercies with his blood. Oh! be of good cheer, continue still thy supplication. "Look unto him, and be lightened."

VI. In the last place, there are some of you here, weary with this world's din, and clamour, and with this world's iniquity and vice. You have been striving all your life long, to put an end to the reign of sin, and it seems as if your efforts have been fruitless; the pillars of hell stand as fast as ever, and the black palace of evil is not laid in ruins; you have brought against it all the battering rams of prayer,

and all the might of God, you have thought,—and yet the world still sins, its rivers still roll with blood, its plains are still defiled with the lascivious dance, and its ear is still polluted with the filthy song and profane oath. God is not honoured; man is still vile; and perhaps you are saying, “It is vain for us to fight on, we have undertaken a task which cannot be accomplished; the kingdoms of this world never can become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.” But, Christian, “Look unto him, and be lightened.” Lo! he cometh, he cometh, he cometh quickly; and what we cannot do in six thousand years, he can do in an instant. Lo! he comes, he comes to reign; we may try to build his throne, but we shall not accomplish it. But when he comes, he shall build his throne himself, on solid pillars of light, and sit and judge in Jerusalem, amidst his saints, gloriously. Perhaps to-day, the hour we are assembled, Christ may come—“For of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels in heaven.” Christ Jesus may, while I yet speak, appear in the clouds of glory. We have no reason to be guessing at the time of his appearing; he will come as a thief in the night; and whether it shall be at cock-crowing, or broad-day, or at midnight, we are not allowed to guess; it is left entirely in the dark, and vain are the prophecies of men, vain your “Apocalyptic Sketches,” or ought of that. No man knoweth anything of it, except that it is certain he will come; but when he comes, no spirit in heaven or on earth should pretend to know. Oh! it is my joyous hope, that he may come whilst yet I live. Perhaps there may be some of us here who shall be alive, and remain at the coming of the Son of Man. Oh, glorious hope! we shall have to sleep, but we shall all be changed. He may come now, and we that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air, and so shall be for ever with him. But if you die, Christian, this is your hope. “I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” And this is to be your duty, “Watch, therefore, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.” Oh, will I not work on, for Christ is at the door! Oh! I will not give up toiling never so hard, for my Master cometh, and his reward is with him, and his work before him, giving unto every man according as his work shall be. Oh, I will not lie down in despair, for the trump is sounding now. Methinks I hear the trampling of the conquering legion, the last of God’s mighty heroes are even now, perhaps, born into the world. The hour of this revival is the hour of the turning to the battle; thick has been the fight, and hot and furious the struggle, but the trump of the Conqueror is beginning to sound, the angel is lifting it now to his lips. The first blast has been heard across the sea, and we shall hear it yet again; or if we hear it not in these our days, yet still it is our hope. He comes, he comes, and every eye shall see him, and they that have crucified him shall weep and wail before him, but the righteous shall rejoice, and shall magnify him exceedingly. “They looked unto him, and were lightened.”

I remember I concluded preaching at Exeter Hall with these three words, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!” and I think I will conclude my sermon of this morning with the same words, but not till I have spoken to one poor forlorn soul who is standing over there, wondering whether there is mercy for him. He says, “It is well enough, sir, to say, ‘Look to Jesus;’ but suppose you cannot look? If your eye is blind—what then?” Oh! my poor brother, turn your restless eyeballs to the cross, and that light which gives light to them that see, shall give eyesight to them that are blind. Oh! if thou canst not believe this morning, look and consider, and weigh the matter, and in weighing and reflecting thou shalt be helped to believe. He asks nothing of thee; he bids thee now believe that he died for thee. If to-day thou feelest thyself a lost, guilty sinner, all he asks is that thou wouldest believe on him; that is to say, trust him, confide in him. Is it not little he asks? And yet it is more than any of us are prepared to give, except the Spirit hath made us willing. Come, cast yourselves upon him; fall flat on his promise; sink or swim, confide in him, and you cannot guess the joy that you shall feel in that one instant that you believe on him. Were there not some of you impressed last Sabbath day, and you have been anxious all the week? Oh! I hope I have brought a good message to you this morning for your comfort. “Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth,” saith Christ, “for I am God, and beside me there is none else.” Look ye now, and looking ye shall live. May every blessing rest upon you, and may each go away to think of that one person whom we love, even Jesus—Jesus—Jesus!

The New Park Street Pulpit.

A PRESENT RELIGION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 30, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God."—1 John iii. 2.

I SHALL not pretend to preach from the whole of my text this morning, short though it be. The word "now" is to me the most prominent word in the text, and I shall make it so this morning. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

It is astonishing how distance blunts the keen edge of anything that is disagreeable. War is at all times a most fearful scourge. The thought of slain bodies and of murdered men must always harrow up the soul; but because we hear of these things in the distance, there are few Englishmen who can truly enter into their horrors. If we should hear the booming of cannon on the deep which girdles this island; if we should see at our doors the marks of carnage and bloodshed; then should we more thoroughly appreciate what war means. But distance takes away the horror, and we therefore speak of war with too much levity, and even read of it with an interest not sufficiently linked with pain. As it is with war, so it is with death. Death is a frightful thing; he who is the bravest must still fear before it, for at best it is a solemn thing to die. Man, therefore, adopts the expedient of putting off all thoughts of death: it may be very near to him, but he conceives it to be at a distance, and then the same effect is produced as when war is at a distance; its horror is forgotten, and we speak of it with less solemnity. So likewise with true religion; men are constrained to believe that there is truth in religion. Though there are some fool-hardy enough to deny it, the most of us in this enlightened land are obliged to acknowledge that there is a power in Godliness. What, then, does the worldling do? He practises the same expedient. He puts religion far away; he knows that its disagreeableness will be diminished by his believing it to be distant. Hence there has sprung up in the minds of the unregenerate world a notion that religion is a thing to be accomplished just at the close of life, and the usual prayer of an ungodly man, when in the slightest degree pricked in his conscience, is, "Oh, that I may be saved at last!" He does not feel anxious to be saved now; religion is a thing for which he has no appetite, and therefore believing it essential to insure his eternal welfare, he adopts the alternative of saying, "I hope to have it at last."

The religion, then, of the present, is not the worldling's religion. He tolerates that which speaks of eternity, that which deals with dying beds; that which leads him to look back with a specious repentance upon a life spent in sin, but not that which will enable him to look forward to a life spent in holiness. Very differently, however, do we act with affairs of the present life; for things that are sweet to us, become the more sweet by their nearness. Was there ever a child who longed for his father's house who did not feel that the holidays grew more sweet in his estimation the shorter the time was that he had to tarry?

What man is there who having once set his heart on riches, did not find his delight in the thought of being rich increase with the nearness of his approach to the desired object? And are we not all of us accustomed, when we think a good thing is at a distance, to try if we can shorten the time between us and it. We

try anything and everything to push on the lagging hours; we chide them; we wish that Time had double wings, that he might swiftly fly and bring the expected season. When the Christian talks of heaven, you will always hear him try to shorten the distance between himself and the happy land; he says,—

“A few more rolling suns at most
Will land me on fair Canaan's coast.”

There may be many years between him and paradise, but still he is prone to say,

“The way may be rough, but it cannot be long.”

Thus do we all delight to shorten the distance between us and the things for which we hope. Now let us just apply this rule to religion. They who love religion love a present thing. The Christian who really seeks salvation, will never be happy unless he can say, “Now am I a child of God.” Because the worldling dislikes it, he puts it from him; because the Christian loves it, therefore its very fairest feature is its present existence, its present enjoyment in his heart. That word “now” which is the sinners warning, and his terror, is to the Christian, his greatest delight and joy. “There is therefore”—and then the sweetest bell of all rings—“there is therefore *now* no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;” to the sinner that same idea is the blackest of all, “He that believeth not is condemned *already*, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.

This morning, in God's name, I shall endeavour to plead with men, and show them the importance of having a present religion. I am quite certain that this is a habit which is too much kept in the back-ground. I am sure from mixing with mankind, that the current belief is, that religion is a future thing, perhaps the wish is father to the thought. I am certain the ground of it is, men love not religion, and therefore they desire to thrust it far from them.

I shall commence by endeavouring to show that religion must be a thing of the present, because the *present* has such intimate connexions with the *future*; and to proceed—We are told in Scripture that this life is a seed time, and the future is the harvest, “He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.” The Scripture often speaks to us in words like these, “They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy.” It is always supposed in Scripture, that this life is the time of generating, if I may use such an expression, the life that is to come, as the seed generates the plant, even so doth this present life generate the eternal future. We know, indeed, that heaven and hell are, after all, but the developments of our present character, for what is hell but this, “He that is filthy, let him be filthy still, and he that is unholy, let him be unholy still?” Do we not know that in the bowels of every sin, damnation slumbers? Is it not a fearful truth that the germ of everlasting torment sleeps in every vile wish, every unholy thought, every unclean act, so that hell is but a great breaking out of slumbering lava, which had been so quiet, that while the mountain was covered with fair verdure, even to its summit, death comes and bids that lava rise; and down the steep of manhood's eternal existence, the fiery flame, and the hot scalding lava of eternal misery doth pour itself. Yet it was there before, for sin is hell, and to rebel against God is but the prelude of misery. So is it with heaven; I know that heaven is a reward, not of debt, but of grace; but still the Christian has that within him, which forestals for him a heaven. What did Christ say? “I give unto my sheep eternal life.” He did not say, I will give, but, I give unto them. “As soon as they believe in me, I give them eternal life,” and “he that believeth, hath eternal life, and shall never come unto damnation.” The Christian hath within him the seed-beds of a paradise; in due time the light that is sown for the righteous, and the gladness that is buried beneath the black earth for the upright in heart, shall spring up, and they shall reap the harvest. Is it not plain then that religion is a thing which we must have here? Is it not prominently revealed that religion is important for the present? for if this life be the seed time of the future, how can I expect to reap in another world other crops than I have been sowing here? how can I trust that I shall be saved, unless I am saved? how can I have hope that heaven shall be my eternal inheritance, unless the earnest be begun in my own soul on earth?

But again, this life is always said in Scripture to be a preparation for the life

to come. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." "They that were ready went in with him to the supper, and the door was shut." There is in this world a getting ready for another world; to use a Biblical figure, we must here put on the wedding dress, which we are to wear for ever. This life is as the vestibule of the king's court, we must put our shoes from off our feet; we must wash our garments and make ourselves ready to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. Somehow, in Scripture, the thought comes out as plain as if written with a sunbeam, this world is the beginning of the end,—it is the preparing-place for the future. Supposing you have no religion now, how will you stand when now is turned into eternity? When days and years are gone, how will it fare with you, if all your days have been spent without God and without Christ? Do you hope to hurry on the white garment after death? Alas! you shall be girt with your shroud, but not be able to put on the wedding raiment. Do you trust that you shall wash you and make you clean in the river Jordan? Alas! ye shall breed corruption in your tomb, but ye shall not find holiness there. Do ye trust to be pardoned after you have departed?

"There are no acts of pardon pass'd
In the cold grave to which we haste;
But darkness, death, and fell despair,
Reign in eternal silence there."

Or, do ye think that when ye near the borders of the grave, then will be the time to prepare? Be not deceived. We read in Scripture one instance of a man saved at the eleventh hour. Remember, there is but one; and we have no reason to believe that there ever was, or ever will be another. There may have been persons saved on their dying beds, but we are not sure there ever were. Such things may have happened, but none of us can tell. Alas! facts are sadly against it; for we have been assured by those who have had the best means of judging—those who have long walked the hospital of humanity—that such as thought they were dying, and made vows of repentance, have almost invariably turned back, like "the dog to his own vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Oh, no; "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;" for to-day is the preparing time for the dread to-morrow—to-day is the making ready for the eternal future.

Let me urge one other reflection here. How are we saved? All through Scripture we are told we are saved by faith, except in one passage, wherein it is said, we are saved by hope. Now note, how certain it is that religion must be a present thing if we are saved by faith, because faith and hope cannot live in another world. "What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" Hope cannot exist in that world of realities where shadows are unknown. How can faith be exercised when we see a thing? for what a man perceiveth by faith that he realises not by sense; and although we say "seeing is believing," it is quite certain that seeing and believing are at opposite poles. Believing is an assurance of that which we see not, and in confidence of faith waiting until we do see it; but seeing is sensuous, and the very reverse of faith. Now if I am to be saved by faith, it is quite certain I must be saved in a state where faith can be exercised, that is in this world; and if I am to be saved by hope, I cannot be saved by hope in that world where hope cannot exist; I must be saved here, for here is the only place where hope can breathe an air that lets it live. The air of heaven is too bright and pure, too heavenly, too warm, too sweet with angels' songs, for faith and hope to inhabit. They leave us on this side of the Jordan; if then we are saved by these, I think it follows—and every one of you must perceive the inference—we must be saved now, because faith and hope are not things of the future. Oh how pleasant, if after these remarks we can say, "Yes, it is so; it is even so, and we rejoice therein, for 'now are we the sons of God.'"

In the second place, as I have briefly shown the connexion between the present and the future, let me use another illustration to show the importance of a present salvation. *Salvation is a thing which brings present blessings.* When you read Scripture, and alas there are few who care to read it as they ought in these times, they read anything rather than their Bibles—when you read Scripture, you will be struck with the fact that every blessing is spoken of in the present tense. You remember how the apostle in one of his epistles says, "Unto them which are saved,

Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." He does not say to them who shall be saved, but to them which *are* saved. We know too that justification is a present blessing—"there is therefore *now* no condemnation." Adoption is a present blessing, for it says, "*Now* are we the sons of God," and we know also that sanctification is a present blessing, for the apostle addresses himself to "the saints who *are* sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called." All the blessings of the new covenant are spoken of in the present tense, because with the exception of eternal glory in heaven, they are all to be enjoyed here. I know this, that I shall be one day, if I am a believer in Christ, more sanctified than I am to-day—if not in the sense of consecration, yet still in the sense of purification—but at the same time I know this of a surety, that when I stand at God's right hand, midst the lamps of eternal brightness, and when these fingers move with vigour across the golden strings, and when this voice is filled with the immortal songs, I shall not be one whit more a child of God than I am now. And when the white robe is upon me, and the crown upon my head, I shall not be more justified than I am at the present moment, for it is the doctrine of Holy Scripture, that

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation in full through his b'ood."

But the assurance of our possession in these things is a present blessing also. I will illustrate what I mean by a circumstance which happened to myself. A lady called upon me in some distress of mind, and this was her difficulty:—She had, she trusted, been converted to God, enjoyed great peace of mind, and for a little season was very full of joy; because she believed that she had been forgiven, and was accepted in the beloved. Naturally enough, seeking her religious instructor, she went to the clergyman of the parish, who, unfortunately for her, was a blind guide, for when she began to tell him concerning her joy, he checked her, by saying, "My good woman, this is all presumption." "Nay, sir," said she, "I trust not; my hope is fixed on nothing else than Jesus; I repose alone in him." "That is right enough," said he, "but you have no authority to say you know you are saved; you have no authority to believe that you are already pardoned." And he told her that he did not believe it possible for any Christian to be assured of this, except a very few eminent saints; they might hope, that was all; they might trust, but they could never be sure. Ah! methinks he had gone but a very little way on the road to the kingdom of heaven. He must have been but a very small infant in Christ, if in Christ at all, to have told her so. For those of us who have for a few years put on the Lord Jesus, know of a surety that there is such a thing as infallible assurance, we know that although there is such a thing as presumption, there is a distinction which every Christian can easily mark between the one and the other. Presumption says, "I am a child of God, and I may live as I like. I know I am saved, I need not therefore seek to have present communion with Christ." But Assurance says, "I know whom I have believed; I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." And then she meekly bows her head, and says, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe; keep me and I shall be kept; draw me and I will run after thee." Oh! my dear hearers, never believe that falsehood of the day—that a man cannot know himself to be a child of God. For if you tell us that, we can refute you with a thousand testimonies. We have seen the poor, the humble, and the illiterate, confident of their interest in Christ. It is true, we have seen them doubt; we have heard their wallings when they could not see Christ with their heart. Yea we have known the time when the greatest of God's people have had to tremble, and say—

"Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought—
'Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I his, or am I not?'"

But still, God's people may be assured; they may know, by the witness of the Spirit within, that they are born of God; for both not an apostle say, "We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren?" "The Spirit

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bearth witness with our spirits that we are born of God." I would that we had more Christians who lived in the enjoyment of full assurance. How precious it is when the milk of faith settles down, and the thick cream of full assurance can be skimmed from the surface as marrow and fatness to the children of God. Religion, then, is a thing of present assurance. A man may know in this life, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he is accepted in Christ Jesus.

Yet I am inclined to think, that the worldly man most of all objects to present religion, because he does not like its duties. Most men would be very religious if religion did not entail obligations. Many a free liver would be a very pious man, if he were not curtailed of a few of his bottles of wine. Many a loose character would have no objection to go up to the temple and pray, and subscribe his name to the God of Jacob, if the gospel did not forbid all uncleanness, and everything that is lascivious. Many a tradesman would put on the Lord Jesus Christ, if there were no necessity to put off the old man; if he could keep his sins and have Christ too—oh, how willing would he be. Indeed, there are a great many who are so fond of it, that they have tried it. We know people who are like the Roman Emperor, who believed that Jesus Christ was God, but thought that all the other strange gods were likewise to be worshipped; so these people think religion a very good thing, but think sin a very good thing too, so they set up one two together, and their whole life is like Janus, two-faced. They look most comely Christians in the synagogue, but they look most unmistakable hypocrites if you see them in the market. Men will not direct a single eye to religion, because it curtails license and entails duties. And this, I think, proves that religion is a present thing, because the duties of religion cannot be practised in another world, they must be practised here.

Now, what are the duties of religion? In the first place, here are its active duties, which a man should do between man and man, to walk soberly and righteously, and uprightly in the midst of an evil generation. Lightly as some people speak about morality, or against morality, there is no true religion where there is no morality. Do not tell me about your orthodoxy, do not come and tell me about your private prayers and secret piety; if your life be bad, you are bad altogether. A good tree cannot bring forth anything but good fruit, and a corrupt tree will bring forth corrupt fruit. There is no questioning that; what your life is, that you are—for as out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, so out of the abundance of the heart the man lives. It is all in vain for you to deprecate so strong a sentiment as this, and to say, "The best of saints are fallible." I know they are; I know that even the best of men will sin, but they will not sin willingly; if they sin publicly, it will be but an exception; their lives, under the power of Divine grace, will be holy, and pure, and upright. I believe the devil likes Antinomianism, and he says to the Romanist, "Preach on, you Priest; I do not mind what you preach, for you will enter my dominions. You tell people that they may live in sin, and then procure absolution for a shilling! Fine doctrine that!" And he pats the priest on the back, and gives him all the assistance he can. Then comes there an Antinomian minister into the pulpit. The devil says, "Ah, though he rails against the Pope of Rome, I like them both, the one as much as the other." Then how he preaches! he begins preaching justification by faith alone, and he carries his argument a step too far, for he begins railing at good works, calls them legalists, who think it their duty to lead a holy life, and hints with a smirk and a smile, that the excellent conduct of a man is of little importance, so long as he believes the truth and goes to his chapel. "Ah," says the devil, "preach away; I love the two things, Antinomianism and Popery, for they are two of the finest quacks for calling souls." Again, I say, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." By our works we are not to be justified, but still by our works we shall be judged, and by our works we shall be condemned. So saith the Scriptures, and this we must receive. Religion, therefore, must be a present thing; we need not talk of walking righteously, and soberly, in the world to come—

"There all is pure, and all is clear,
There all is joy and love."

There will be no duty to discharge between the tradesman and the customer, between the debtor and the creditor, between the father and the child, between the

husband and the wife, in heaven, for all these relationships shall have passed away. Religion must be intended for this life; the duties of it cannot be practised, unless they are practised here.

But besides these, there are other duties devolving upon the Christian. Though it is every man's duty to be honest and sober, the Christian has another code of law. It is the Christian's duty to love his enemies, to be at peace with all men, to forgive as he hopes to be forgiven; and it is his duty not to resist evil, when smitten on the one cheek to turn the other also; it is his duty to give to him that asketh of him, and from him that would borrow of him not to turn away—he is to be a liberal soul, devising liberal things. It is the Christian's duty to visit his Master's children when they are sick, so that it may be said to him at last, "I was sick, and naked, and in prison, and ye visited me, and ministered to my necessities." Now, if religion be not a thing for this world, I ask you how is it possible to perform its duties at all? There are no poor in heaven whom we can comfort and visit; there are no enemies in heaven whom we can graciously forgive; and there are no injuries inflicted, or wrongs endured, which we can bear with patience. Religion must have been intended in the very first place for this world, it must have been meant that now we should be the sons of God. For again I repeat it, that the major part of the duties of religion cannot be practised in heaven, and therefore religion must be a present thing.

But, coming near to our conclusion, I believe there are many more persons who do not like religion for to-day, but who want to have it at the last, for this reason: they think religion is not a happy thing; they believe it makes men miserable. They have met with persons with long faces; they have seen some who were born in stormy weather, and who seem to have lived all their lives long with a hurricane inside their hearts, never having one flash of sunlight, nor one pleasant rainbow across their brow. Many young people imbibe this idea. They think that surely religion must be a thing that will make men go moping and melancholy all through this world. In fact, they enter the chapel sometimes, and they hear the saints singing—and what a sweet hymn it is—a sorry sweetness in truth!—

"Lord, what a wretched land is this;"

and they go out and say, "No doubt it is; we will have nothing to do with it." Looking upon religion as medicine which is extremely nauseous,—if they must drink it, they will put it off to the last; they will gulp it down with a "Lord, have mercy on me!" and ere its bitterness is fairly in their mouth, they expect to begin to enjoy its sweetness in heaven. What a mistake! Religion has its present enjoyments. I do solemnly affirm to-day, in the face of this congregation, and before Almighty God, if I were certain that I were to die like a dog, and when I was buried there would be an end of me, had I my choice of the happiest life a man could lead, I would say, "Let me be a Christian;" for if, as some say, it be a delusion, it is one of the most magnificent delusions that ever was devised. If any man could prove the religion of Christ to be a delusion, the next thing he should do would be to hang himself, because there is nothing worth living for. He might well sit down and weep to think he had made a ruin of so goodly a structure, and dissolved such a pleasant dream.

Ah! beloved, there are present enjoyments in religion. Speak, ye that know them, for ye can tell; yet ye cannot recount them all. Oh! would ye give up your religion for all the joys that earth calls good or great? Say, if your immortal life could be extinguished, would you give it up, even for all the kingdoms of this world? Oh! ye sons of poverty, has not this been a candle to you in the darkness? Has not this lightened you through the dark shades of your tribulation? Oh! ye horny-handed sons of toil, has not this been your rest, your sweet repose? Have not the testimonies of God been your song in the house of your pilgrimage? Oh! ye daughters of sorrow, ye who spend the most of your time upon your beds—and your couch to you is a rack of pain—has not religion been to you a sweet quietus? When your bones were sore vexed, could ye not even then praise him on your beds? Speak from your couches to-day, ye consumptives, blanched though your cheeks; speak this day from your beds of agony, ye that are troubled with innumerable diseases, and are drawing near your last home! Is not religion worth having in the sick chamber, on the bed of pain and anguish? "Ah!" they heartily say, "we can praise him on our beds; we can sing his high praises in the fire." And ye men of business, speak

for yourselves! You have hard struggles to pass through life. Sometimes you have been driven to a great extremity, and whether you would succeed or not seemed to hang upon a thread. Has not your religion been a joy to you in your difficulties? Has it not calmed your minds? When you have been fretted and troubled about worldly things, have you not found it a pleasant thing to enter your closet, and shut-to the door, and tell your Father in secret all your cares? And O ye that are rich, cannot you bear the same testimony, if you have loved the Master? What had all your riches been to you without a Saviour? Can you not say, that your religion did gild your gold, and make your silver shine more brightly? for all things that you have are sweetened by this thought, that you have all these and Christ too! Was there ever a child of God who could deny this? We have heard of many infidels who grieved over their infidelity when they came to die. Did you ever hear of a Christian acting the counterpart? Did you ever hear of any one on his death-bed looking back on a life of holiness with sorrow? We have seen the rake, with a wasted constitution, shrivel into a corpse through his iniquities, and we have heard him bemoan the day in which he went astray. We have seen the poor debauched child of sin rotting with disease, and listened to her shriek, and heard her miserably curse herself that she ever turned aside, to what was called the path of gaiety, but what was really the path to hell. We have seen the miser too, who has gripped his bags of gold, and on his dying bed we have found him curse himself, that when he came to die, his gold, though laid upon his heart, could not still its aching and give him joy. Never, never did we know a Christian who repented of his Christianity. We have seen Christians so sick, that we wondered that they lived—so poor, that we wondered at their misery; we have seen them so full of doubts, that we pitied their unbelief; but we never heard them say, even then, “I regret that I gave myself to Christ.” No; with the dying clasp, when heart and flesh were failing, we have seen them hug this treasure to their breast, and press it to their heart, still feeling that this was their life, their joy, their all. Oh! if ye would be happy, if ye would be saved, if ye would strew your path with sunshine, and dig out the nettles and blunt the thorns, “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Seek not happiness first; seek Christ first, and happiness shall come after. Seek ye first the Lord, and then he will provide for you everything that is profitable for you in this life, and he will crown it with everything that is glorious in the life to come. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.”

Before closing this discourse, I fear that there are a great many of you who will say, “Well, I care nothing at all about religion; it is of no avail to me!” No, my friends, and it is very probable that you will not care about it, until it shall be too late to care. Mayhap you will go on putting off these thoughts, until the day shall come, when they will come so thick upon you, that you will not be able to procrastinate any longer, and then will you in right earnest set about seeking Christ; but at that hour he will say to you, “Inasmuch as Moab hath wearied himself upon the high places, and he betaketh himself to my sanctuary, I will not hear him, saith the Lord.” “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” *now*; “for many *shall* seek to enter in, but shall not be able.” Let us fear, lest, having the gospel preached in our ears, we should neglect and put it off until the last hour has struck, and we find ourselves without hope, when there is no time to seek a Saviour.

I know where this morning's sermon will be found profitable. It will be in the case of those who are seeking Christ. Old Flockhart, who used to preach till within the last few months in the streets of Edinburgh, a much despised, but a very godly man, used to say, “When I begin my sermon, I begin by preaching the law, and then I bring the gospel afterwards; for,” he said, “it is like a woman who is sewing—she cannot sew with thread alone, she first sticks a sharp needle through, and then draws the thread afterwards; so,” he says, “does the Lord with us; he sends the sharp needle of conviction, the needle of the law, into our hearts, and pricks us in the heart, and he draws through the long silken thread of consolation afterwards.” Oh! I would that some of you were pricked in the heart to-day. Remember, there are thunders in this book; though they are sleeping now, they will wake by-and-bye. There are in this Bible curses too horrible for heart to know their full extent of meaning; they are slumbering now, but they shall waken, and when they leap from between the folded leaves, and the seven seals are broken, where will you flee, and where shall you hide yourselves, in that last great day of anger? If, then, ye are pricked to the heart, I preach to you the

gospel now. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." This day look to him that hung upon the cross. This day believe and live.

And now to illustrate the manner in which rebellious sinners are reconciled to God, I will relate to you an interesting anecdote from the life of a soldier. It may picture to your minds the majesty of God in shewing grace, and the humbling experience of the sinner in receiving it, and help us to answer that solemn question—"What must I do to be saved?" My author says, that himself and his comrades of a certain regiment serving in India, had been without pay for about six months, and there was strong suspicion throughout the ranks that their commanding officer had embezzled the money: he was a great gambler, and they thought it most likely that he had gambled away their pay. They were determined to seek redress; so all the private soldiers (with the exception of non-commissioned officers,) agreed that on a particular morning, when on parade, they should not obey the word of command. The day arrived, and they carried their design into execution. The regiment was assembled; the men in companies, headed by their respective officers, proceeded to the parade ground, and formed into open column. The commanding officer took his station in front and gave the word of command. Not one, however, of the privates obeyed. This being the conduct of the regiment, the commanding officer, with great self-possession, ordered every tenth man to be confined in the guard-house. It was done without a show of resistance. After which, all the privates fixed bayonets, shouldered arms, and marched off—the band playing and the drums beating alternately—all the way to the residence of the general, about a mile distant. There they halted, and formed in line fronting the house, in a most orderly manner. One man from each of the ten companies then stepped forward, and they proceeded to lodge a written complaint against the colonel. Having thus fulfilled their purpose, they marched back, and dismissed; but the next thing was to release the prisoners, and this they did without any violence being offered by the guard. Whatever extenuations we may conceive for such conduct, according to military law it was a heinous crime. The soldier's duty is to obey; he must not think for himself, but he must be as a tool in the hands of his superior officers, to do as he is told, and not to complain. Shortly after this, to the surprise of these soldiers, the general was seen approaching with a large army of Sepoys, infantry and cavalry, with field pieces in front. The regiment went out and respectfully saluted him, forming in line. But this was not what the general came for. They saw the storm brewing and prepared to fight. After the two lines had been formed, facing each other, the General moved out on horseback, and said, "Twenty-second, take the command from me." They obeyed. He then said, "Order arms." Next—"Handle arms;"—and last, which was most disgraceful to them—"Ground arms." Having thus disarmed, he ordered his black cavalry to charge upon them, and drive them from their arms. One more order he gave to those disaffected men, that they should strip off their accoutrements and lay them on the ground, and be off to their cantonments. When he had thus disarmed and dishonoured the men, he forgave them.

And now will not this incident fitly represent the manner of God with sinners, when according to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, he brings terms of peace and reconciliation to us who are in revolt against him? He says, "Ground arms, give up your sins, take off your self-righteousness." He disarms us, dishonours us, and strips off all our comely array, and then says, "Now I will forgive you." If there be any one here who has thrown down his weapons of rebellion, and whose fine ornaments of beauty are stained with shame, let him believe that God will now forgive him; he forgives those who cannot forgive themselves. The great Captain of our salvation will pardon those whom he has humbled. He will have you submit to his will, and though that will may at first seem imperious to drive you from your quarters, and visit you with punishment, you shall presently find that his sovereign will is gracious, and he delighteth in mercy. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," for thus saith the Word, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

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"THE ONLY RIGHTEOUSNESS."

A Sermon

PREACHED ON TUESDAY EVENING, JANUARY 6TH, 1857,

BY THE REV. J. J. WEST, M.A.,

(*Rector of Winchelsea, Sussex.*)

AT THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY SOMERSET, THAMES STREET,
LONDON.

"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Blessed they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."—Romans iv. 6, 7, 8.

Now, my hearers, you have already heard read by the rector, in the desk, the Psalm in which a portion of my text stands.—The 32nd Psalm is the one to which the Apostle refers in the two verses that I have read to you as a text; the material upon which I, as God's workman, desire rightly to divide the Word of Truth, by His Holy Spirit teaching me. I cannot imagine to a serious minded man or woman—who has been rescued from a vain course, either of dead worldliness or dead profession—any subject more full of blessed realities, for the Church to contemplate than this which the text contains.

Now, no man was better able (by an experimental path) to describe what he spoke of than David. We know how grievously David sinned, how tremendously David fell, how cold-blooded and premeditated his sin was—that he had not the mere excuse of being drawn into a sly snare, or by a sudden temptation; but the sin of the man after God's own heart was a cold-blooded and deliberately premeditated act; and, therefore, I can understand how David's heart must have been melted under the mercy of that God whom the Apostle describes to be "rich in mercy," when, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, David knew that there was pardon for the worst of crimes.

I will take two or three points to preach upon from the great subject which the text contains.

First of all, the peculiar blessedness of that man or woman who knows experimentally in his or in her soul the reality of the fact that "God imputeth righteousness" without any work of ours. Now, in preaching upon that great doctrine—I believe I shall have the sympathy of every Christian before me, when I say that creature, or self-righteousness, is a great snare. Look at one great memorable example in the Book of God; look at Job, see how he clung almost to the very last to his self-righteousness, till Almighty God wrought in him that wonderful work, and compelled the proud sinner to declare, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear;" (and so have all the professors of London)—"but now mine eye seeth Thee"—(no mere

professor can say that)—“wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

There is nothing, I say, that sticks to us so close as self-righteousness. Now mark the text. “God imputeth righteousness without works”—and I conceive it to be a most important point in every pulpit in these days, when we have so much of a yea and nay Gospel, to distinguish between grace and works—to discriminate between Church and world—to distinguish between mere profession and real possession—that we may ascertain the mighty and important fact, whether we are of the Church or whether we are of the world. And here is the sovereignty of God, (as I was preaching to my own flock on Sunday)—that wonderful way in which the grace of God discriminates between the two seeds in Rebecca’s womb—in her twin sons, Jacob and Esau; that “the children, being not yet born,” (mark me!)—neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to “election might stand, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger,” as it is written, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” If there was no other verse in the Bible, that wonderful verse would be quite amply sufficient to cut up the false doctrine of salvation by works. But while, perhaps, there are several before me who would not positively assert that any man could go to heaven by good works, yet there may be many here, in this large attendance, who think that there must be something done by the sinner in order to attain to heaven’s happiness. Let me read to you upon that subject (not to use words of my own) a decisive passage in this same epistle, in chapter eleven:—“Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” It was so at Rome. It is so now in London. It is a “little flock” amid the masses of your populous city; it is a “little flock,” comparatively speaking; but there is in London now, as in the Apostle’s time at Rome, “a remnant according to the election of grace.” A draper knows the meaning of a remnant; it is not a whole piece!! Now see how this passage proceeds:—“If by grace, then no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” There is the doctrine, my hearers, and I am satisfied in my own conscience that if you never hear doctrines again, you have heard ample to-night, if the Holy Spirit sanctify in your hearts the truth of the Gospel.

I want to get into the experimental reality of the words before me—the blessedness of that particular individual who is favoured by God to have a righteousness, (and without a righteousness he cannot be saved—not a righteousness of his own)—a righteousness without works. Now, then, my brother and sister in Christ Jesus, what is the Righteousness which the Apostle is speaking of in the text before me? It is the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ; it is a righteousness with which the creature has nothing to do, except to be the recipient of it; it is imputed to him by the Holy Spirit, by which he is put into a position as if he had never sinned, by which, (as he stands in Christ and is received in Christ,) he is as perfect as God is perfect, as holy as God is holy. Christ (mark me!) is the believer’s Righteousness. Do you remember a tremendous parable in the Gospel of Matthew, that when the King came in to see the guests, “he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment?” Do you know that parable? The address to that man was, “Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? and he was speechless.” “Then said the King to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” And that, simply and entirely because the man had not on a wedding garment. Now, the text describes and speaks of “the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.” The solemn point is this (and

THE ONLY RIGHTHOUSNESS.

this is the way to preach the Gospel profitably, and this is the way to hear the Gospel, if the Holy Spirit apply it)—have we got this Righteousness? Have we received that faith in Christ by which we feel that we stand before God in a righteousness not our own? I cannot conceive a sweeter evidence that we are so arrayed than having a sense of our entire nothingness before God—a deep, inward-felt sense, that we are nothing but sin and vileness—that we are deeply impressed, and abidingly so, with a sense of our own hell-deservings, and that nothing can save us from the hell that we each deserve but that finished and complete work which has been effected on the cross by the GLORIOUS SON OF GOD. We are told in the Epistle to the Ephesians:—“Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it (now mark!), that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish.” Do you feel your sins? Do you grieve on account of your sins? Have you a heart exercised day by day because of the atrocity of your nature? Do you hear what the Word says? The work of CHRIST, the effect of His love, was to present such a sinner as you are before HIS FATHER, and to HIMSELF, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;” that you “should be holy and without blemish.” Not holy in yourselves—full of blemishes in yourselves; but holy in HIM, perfect in the REDEEMER’S RIGHTHOUSNESS. I may quote a sweet idea in Kent’s hymn:—

“Tis His own, He dearly bought her,
What she cost He only knew;
Through the pains of hell He sought her,
Paid in blood her ransom too.”

The Church is the property of Christ; His finished work has sufficiently and entirely satisfied all the wrath of the Trinity against sin. He has run the gauntlet, if I may so speak, of Jehovah’s vengeance. HE, the just, the holy, the sinless Christ, has entirely, completely, and sufficiently atoned for all the guilt and all the atrocity of ELDER men and women. He has atoned for David’s murder and David’s adultery, for Peter’s oaths and Peter’s lies; and, blessed be God, I have a little hope in my own soul that He has pardoned the mass of sins that I have been guilty of ever since I was born. David describeth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works. Newton says:—

“Thus though a sinner——”

Listen to me! fellow sinners. Look how Newton exulted in the very fact I am preaching on to you; and in early life great had been the sins of the afterwards Vicar of Olney:—

“Thus, though a sinner, I am safe;
He pleads before the throne
His life and death in my behalf,
And calls my sins His own.
“What boundless love, what mysteries,
In this appointment shine;
My breaches of the law are His,
And His obedience mine!”

We are told in the book of Isaiah, “He shall bear their iniquities.” Now, we churchmen, as you have already heard in the desk, celebrate to-day what we term, in our Prayer-book, the Epiphany!! the word in the Greek signifies appearance, or manifestation. We read in Paul’s Epistle to Timothy, “Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh.” I take that meaning in all senses. I take it as applicable to His wonderful incarnation; I take it as applicable to HIM as GOD and MAN in ONE CHRIST. But, my hearers, has the Christ of God, has the Holy Ghost manifested this

precious Christ in your heart? Have you seen HIM? Let me read you a passage that, perhaps, is not wholly inapplicable to the subject I am speaking on—"There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and the same man was just and devout waiting for the consolation of Israel."—(Who is the consolation of Israel—Christ! He is the consolation); and "the Holy Ghost was upon him." Here is an account of a man just as hell-deserving a wretch as I am; but the Holy Ghost was upon him, and therefore, hell could not have him. And you will mark the position of the man: he was "WAITING for the consolation of Israel." I wonder how many waiters there are in this church to-night? What do you come to church for? As I ask my home hearers sometimes—do you come to church, as many people do—(bear with my plain English)—for mere form only? Or do you come, as Simeon came, into the temple, led by the Spirit of God? Mere parish form won't do! The right way to come into the temple of God is by the leading of the Holy Spirit of God, and there to wait for "the consolation of Israel."

"The Holy Ghost was upon him." Mark, Epiphany! you know the meaning of that word—"and it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." There's an Epiphany! O! you little ones before me that are waiting, longing, wrestling, striving, afraid to die, frightened out of your senses at the idea of going into the presence of God; it was revealed unto Simeon that he should "not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." There's a sight to see before we die. My hearers, do we emulate the example of Simeon? It was revealed to him. People say we are enthusiastic. People may call us what they like, but we say that it is still true that these things must be revealed unto us by the Spirit of God. That is as essential to you and to me in 1857 in order rightly to understand anything of the Saviour as it was in the period when Simeon was waiting for Jesus Christ in the temple.

But I must go further into this subject. "He came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law, then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Imagine this picture by faith; imagine the venerable and honoured Simeon waiting for Christ.—See Joseph and Mary enter the temple doors—see them bringing in their arms THE INFANT BABE—that Babe which, as Mary held him, was God and man in one eternal Christ. And then look at Simeon—"Then took he HIM up in his arms"—(he clutched the Christ from His mother's arms, and breathed up his prayers to God)—"Lord now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen THY SALVATION." That's the Epiphany, and there's no other; and if you have not seen Christ by faith, and been brought to wait for Him, you know nothing of the reality of these things. At present you may not have attained to this, but there is a set time of favour for all God's people. There may be many here astounded at what I am preaching to them, and they may call it enthusiasm, or Calvinism or anything else, but if you are a child of God, though you may be now as dead as the seats you sit on, the grace of God will be revealed unto your souls, and you will have no peace till you have an Epiphany of JESUS CHRIST as your SAVIOUR in your soul.

Now the description that David gives of the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, mark how it empties the creature—how it leads us to the Son of God—how it takes us out of self, and fixes the eye of faith upon HIM who is "mighty to save"—"the just for the unjust (as Peter says), that He might bring us to God;" and sets forth the finished and complete work of the Saviour.

Now the text goes on, my hearers—"blessed are they whose iniquities are

forgiven, whose sins are covered." There can be no *desire* for the pardon of sin till we are brought under condemnation on account of the guilt of sin, and hence the Apostle's argument is so blessed—"I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." This great verse brings us to a right understanding of the truth I desire to set before you. The previous state of the Apostle—"I was alive without the law once (or as it is in the Greek, *formally*). When Paul was in his blood—when he was not born of the Holy Spirit, he was alive without the law, "but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died"—Paul felt himself a dead man then!

It is quite impossible that any one of you, or that I, can either desire, or value, or wish for, the salvation that is in the Son of God till we have been brought, as I suppose I have preached to you often before, under a law work, until we have been condemned, and not merely condemned, but shut up in the condemned cell, out of which it is impossible to get, till the door is opened for you. Know that the law—those ten commandments—demands the most implicit obedience. It admits of no flaw. It takes us (as it were) "by the throat," and the demand is, "pay me that thou owest." Hence a sinful thought is sufficient to condemn any man. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Now, will you just contemplate what I say; and hence (Romans iii. 19, 20) "What things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God; therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Now, till this has been worked in us and upon us by the Holy Spirit of God, we shall never value the precious Saviour, nor have a desire to be saved in the way JEHOVAH saves His people. And so the Apostle speaks of his own experience—"when the commandment *came*, sin revived, and I died;" and here is the advantage from preaching these things. I remember in my own church a striking instance of it in one who, if not now dead, is upon a bed of death. That woman had been a devoted follower of the sect called Wesleyans, and she had fallen in with their heresies; but on one occasion, some years ago, she came over to hear me from an adjoining parish, and just as she entered the church I gave out as a text—"For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." That dropped into the woman's soul; there was immediately a something she had not seen before, and she is now a believer of free grace doctrines. She doubts about herself as to being a Christian, for she knows what darkness of soul is—she has her many doubts and fears. But this is the way in which God works and applies His truth to the heart with power! she had always before been taught to make (as it were) a ladder of her own—to get to heaven by her own works; but, as Kent says, then

"The Lord revealed my desperate case
And down my Babel fell."

So you and I must be brought simply to the blood of the atonement; and here is the truth which we are to declare from our pulpit tops, "Blessed are they whose sins are covered." It is in the *past* tense you observe! the thing was done and finished when the Redeemer bowed His head upon the cross and gave up the ghost. O the riches of HIS MERCY! O the love of GOD! "Who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us"—(that is His people)—"even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." "By grace ye are saved."

Now, my hearers, the point for me to speak upon here is the pardon of sin—"Blessed are they whose sins are covered." All your sins, all that you have

ever done, (if you are a child of God,) and every thing you have done against God in thought, word, or deed, is blotted out. See that wonderful statement in Jeremiah's prophecy—"In those days, and at that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none, and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found, for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

And mark, for your encouragement, poor distressed one! it is *sin*—all sin! There is a gradation scale of sins in a moral sense between man and man; but in God's sight everything that savors of sin, is sin. We know what we understand by murder; but the Word of God defines hatred of a brother to be murder.—And mark me, adultery does not consist merely in the very act—for "he that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Now, how can we escape? But, my fellow-sinners, here is the blood that cleanseth *THE ELECT* from all sin, sins of all kinds and sorts and sizes—little sins and great sins; sins at school, sins of boyhood, sins of manhood and womanhood, and sins in old age—the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth *us* from *ALL SIN*. Is not this good news to you who have been made *sensible* sinners—to you who know the meaning of that sweet word which we heard in the desk—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard, and saved him out of all his troubles." (I longed to take that as a text.)

And what is your trouble my brother and sister? Very great is the trouble you feel under a sense of sin when you are condemned and shut up in the condemned cell and cannot get out; the cry of the broken heart then is, "Lord, save me or I perish." Well, now, here is the mercy set before us in the Gospel. And look what it cost. Have you ever counted the cost? I was much struck with reading in the *Times* the other day the account of the execution of a man at your Old Bailey. The thing that touched my heart was this, that when the hangman was performing the process of pinioning the felon he looked up into the convict's face with a look of pity and said, "do I hurt you?" Here was a tenderness of feeling even for a murderer—but when the Jews nailed Christ to the cross there was no pity felt—no desire even to mitigate but rather to add to the sufferings of Jesus—"Crucify HIM, crucify HIM" was the cry! "not this man but Barrabas." In addition to HIS anguish and suffering they mocked HIM, spit upon HIM, they tortured HIM, and all this! *what for?* To save such a wretch as I am; and (if *you are elected*), every one of you. Well does Isaiah describe HIM by the Spirit of God, as "A MAN OF SORROWS AND ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF!" That is full of meaning!

And now look at the pardon of sin, my hearers, look at the blotting out of iniquity—"whose sins are covered." How covered? In the precious blood of the Saviour. Well does the hymn declare:—

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Loose all their guilty stains."

Have you been washed at that fountain? Ah, listen to me while I read to you, (on the covering of sin—a passage in Micah)—"Who is a God like unto *THEE* that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of HIS heritage? *HE* retaineth not *HIS* anger for ever because *HE* delighteth in mercy. *HE* will turn again, *HE* will have compassion upon us; *HE* will subdue our iniquities; and *THOU* wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Observe that expression, "the depths of the sea," that is the particular spot in the sea where the tide has no power to wash anything up again. There's the force of the expression! If you throw anything from the seashore into the sea within the power of the tide it will be cast back

THE ONLY RIGHTEOUSNESS.

again.—But observe the simile in the Bible—“THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA! so that they can never rise up in judgment against us. Oh, my hearers, you who have a feeling sense of sin—you who know what you have been guilty of—is not *this therefore* a mercy. And I cannot conceive a sweeter test that our sins are covered in God's sight, than that they are continually conspicuous in our own. David says, “my sin is ever before me.” But look; it is covered sin, blotted out; and so I may quote the thought in one of the hymns:—

“The Holy Ghost this witness bears;
He stands in Jesus still cemblete.”

Covered sin! Iniquity blotted out! never to be brought in accusation against us in that tremendous hour when you and I must all stand before God in judgment. Then can we not, in some degree, sympathise with the reality of David's words, when he describes the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and whose sin is covered? Blessedness indeed!!

Look at the lovingkindness of God in this! It does not say blessed is the man in whom there is *no* sin. You cannot find such a man, except the God-man. What were the prophets and apostles of old time better than I am? Not one jot! Where can you find a man or a woman without sin? yea, we are full of sin. But the word is—“Blessed is the man to whom Jehovah (for that ought to be the word, as it is in the original) Jehovah—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—to whom the Triune God will not impute sin. He will not allow it to be imputed; and so the word says of all saved sinners, “They are without fault before the throne of God.” Now is not this good news to every poor wretched sinner who feels bowed down as a bullrush under a sense of sin. But this is not so to all men. There is a limitation, “Come unto Me all that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” There's the qualification—LABOURING UNDER A SENSE OF SIN! How many are there in this church now really worn down under a sense of sin? You are in the very state to hear the invitation, “Come unto Me,”—and the promise, “I will give you rest.” Or again, in the words of the 55th of Isaiah “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye buy and eat; yea come buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Blessed is the man then—(do you follow me, my hearers?)—to whom the Jehovah will not impute sin.

Now, for a passing instant, as I finish preaching to you, think upon the day of judgment! The word in the Ephesians is, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in HIM before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before HIM.” We read also in a passage in Jude, “Now unto HIM that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” That may be a word for some of you, “able to keep you from falling.” We are all liable to fall;

“Sly snares beset the traveller's feet
And make him often halt.”

But look at the description of our God—“He is able to keep you from falling.” What was the Apostle's confession in the Acts of the Apostles, “HAVING THEREFORE OBTAINED HELP OF GOD I CONTINUE UNTO THIS DAY!” And what, my brother, is there so blessed as to be able to say that the Lord has kept us in possession of the truth and in His Fear ever since he brought us to HIMSELF? You know the account of the father who had the lunatic son,—“he oftentimes fell into the fire and oft into the water,” and the word is, “I brought him to Thy disciples and they could not cure him.”—But Christ said, “Bring him hither to Me.” Then He healed him and

cured him. And this is the God whom I preach to you, and he is able to keep you from falling. Hence then your privilege to call upon God; (and nobody can have said it more experimentally than David,) "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe." What said Bradford when he saw a man taken to the gallows?—"There goes John Bradford, but for the grace of God!" Wonder, oh, heavens! the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us, and we shall be presented (if we are His people) "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

But, my hearers, you must expect trials and troubles. You must expect to be cast out as evil—"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake." And we read in a striking passage these words:—"And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Now the church is surrounded by adversaries! Is there one enemy of the Church of God before me? Then listen to the word of God. It is to you an evident token of perdition, and if you die in that state you will be damned to all eternity. Bear with my plain speaking. I preach not to please men, "For if I yet pleased men I should not be the SERVANT OF CHRIST."

But look at the other side of the picture, "BUT TO YOU OF SALVATION AND THAT OF GOD."

What did Paul say? How Paul exulted when he address the church of Corinth. "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." And if there is no enemy there is no Gospel. If there is no opposition there is no truth:—"But unto you of salvation and that of God, "for unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on HIM "but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which ye saw in HIM "and now hear in me."

May the GREAT and GLORIOUS SUBJECT that in weakness I have endeavoured to set before you, abide by you and in you—at your bedsides to night—and when you lie down upon your beds may the Holy Ghost whisper the reality of this great text into your hearts, that you may have the solemn question applied by power—Do I know anything of the blessedness of pardon? Am I amongst the blessed ones that I heard the preacher speak of? There may be many here quite unable to get up so high as that, but if you really DESIRE to attain that blessedness, wait for it till it comes; wait for an Epiphany in your souls; wait like Simeon; and you cannot wait unless God gives you a waiting soul. But what says the promise? "He that waiteth on his Master SHALL be honoured." May a great blessing follow the preaching of the word in this house of God. And now I will read the text:—"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man"—(and the only man that is blessed, and the only blessedness—Think of death! think of eternity!—of the blessedness of dying in Jesus!)"—"unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. May God bless the Gospel for Christ's sake.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE SPIES.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 6, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature."—Numbers xiii. 32.

"And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes. And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land."—Numbers xiv. 6. 7.

THE unbelief of the children of Israel, prompted them to send spies into Canaan. God had told them that it was a good land, and he had promised to drive out their enemies; they ought therefore to have marched forward with all confidence to possess the promised heritage. Instead of this, they send twelve princes to spy out the land, and "alas, for human nature," ten of these were faithless, and only two true to the Lord. Read over the narrative, and mark the ill effect of the lying message, and the holy boldness of the true spies.

Now I must take up my parable. The land of Canaan is a picture of religion; I do not think it was ever intended to be a picture of heaven, for there are no Canaanites in heaven; certainly in heaven there are no sons of Anak, no giants to be driven out, no walled cities, and no kings with chariots of iron. Canaan is, however, a very excellent picture of religion. The children of Israel must stand this morning as the representatives of the great mass of mankind. The great mass of mankind never try for themselves what religion is; they neither search our sacred books, nor taste and try our religion. But this is what they do; they consider those who make a profession of religion as spies who have entered the land, and they look upon our character and our conduct as the message which we bring back to them. The ungodly man does not read his Bible in order to discover whether the religion of Christ is holy and beautiful; no, he reads the living Bible—Christ's church—and if the church is inconsistent he condemns the Bible, though the Bible is never to be accountable for the sins of those who profess to believe it. Ungodly men of course do not come and by repentance and faith make a trial of the love of Christ; they do not enter into covenant with the Lord Jesus, or else they would soon discover that it is a good land that floweth with milk and honey; but instead thereof they stand still, and they say, "Let be, let us see what these Christians make of it. Do they find it to be a happy thing? Does it succour *them* in their hour of trouble? Does it comfort *them* in the midst of their trials?" And if they find that our report is a gloomy or an unholy one, they turn aside, and they say, "It is not a good land; we will not enter into it, for its difficulties are great, but its enjoyments are few."

Beloved brethren and friends, to put the parable as simply as I can, I am about to make out every Christian man and woman here to be a spy who has entered into the good land of religion, and who by his conduct and conversation brings either an evil or a good report of this good land, and either moves the world to murmur at and to despise religion, or else inspires it with a holy dread of goodness, and something of a longing after a portion therein.

But I shall begin with a word of caution. In the first place I shall notice that *the men of the world are not to be excused for their folly in trusting to mere report from*

other persons. Then, secondly, I shall endeavour to describe *the evil reporters*, the evil spies, which are in the camp; then we will mention some *good spies*, who bring a good report of the land; and, in conclusion, bring a few *weighty reasons* to bear upon *Christian men*, why they should act like Galeb and Joshua, and bring up a good report of the land.

I. In the first place, then, **THE UNGODLY WORLD ARE NOT TO BE EXCUSED** for that, which must nevertheless be admitted to be a very natural matter, namely, that **INSTEAD OF INVESTIGATING RELIGION FOR THEMSELVES, THEY USUALLY TRUST TO THE REPRESENTATION OF OTHERS.**

The worldly man looks at a Christian to see whether his religion be joyful. "By this," says he, "shall I know whether there is that in religion which will make a man glad. If I see the professor of it with a joyous countenance, then I will believe it to be a good thing." But hark, sir! hast thou any right to put it to that test? Is not God to be counted true, even before we have proved him? And hath he not declared himself, "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile?" Doth not the Scripture itself declare that godliness is profitable, not only for this life, but for that which is to come—that it hath the blessing of two worlds, the blessing of this world below the sky and of that upper world above the stars? Would you not know from Scripture if you were to take the Bible and read it, that everywhere the Christian is commanded to rejoice, because it is comely for him? "Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart." "Rejoice evermore." "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice." Remember you have no right to put the joyfulness of religion to any test short of your own experiences, for you are bound to believe God on his naked word. It is not for you to stand still till you can see it to be true. It is your duty to believe your Maker when he declares that the ways of religion are pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

Again, you say you will test the holiness of Christ's religion by the holiness of Christ's people. You have no right, I reply, to put the question to any such test as that. The proper test that you ought to use is to try it yourselves—to "taste and see that the Lord is good." By tasting and seeing you will prove his goodness, and by the same process you must prove the holiness of his gospel. Your business is to seek Christ crucified for yourselves, not to take the representation of another man concerning the power of grace to subdue corruption and to sanctify the heart. Your business is yourselves to enter into its valleys and pluck its grapes; yourselves to climb its hills and see its inhabitants. Inasmuch as God has given you a Bible, he intended you to read it, and not to be content with reading *men*. There is his Holy Spirit; you are not to be content with feelings that rise through the conversation of others; your only power to know true religion is, by having that Spirit operating upon your own heart, that you may yourself know what is the power of religion. You have no right to judge religion from anything extra or external from itself. And if you despise it before you have tried it yourself, you must stand confessed in this world as a fool, and in the next world as a criminal. And yet this is so with most men. If you hear a man rail at the Bible, you can usually conclude that he never reads it. And you may be quite certain if you hear a man speak against religion, that he never knew what religion was. True religion, when once it takes possession of the heart, never allows a man to quarrel with it. That man will call Christ his best friend who knows Christ at all. We have found many who have despised the enjoyments of this world, but we never found one who turned from religion with disgust or with satiety, after having once enjoyed it. No, remember my hearers, if you take your religion from other people, and are led by the example of professors to discard religion, you are nevertheless guilty of your own blood. For God has not left you to the uncertain chart of men's characters; he has given you his own Word, a more sure word, and testimony, whereunto you do well if ye take heed.

It will be in vain for you to say at the day of judgment, "Such and such a man was inconsistent, therefore I despised religion." Your excuse will then be discovered to be idle, for you shall have to confess, that in other respects, you did not take another man's opinion. In business, in the care of this life, you were independent enough; in your political opinions you did not pin your faith to any man's coat; and, therefore, it shall be said of you at last, you had enough independence of mind to steer your own course, even against the example of others, in business, in politics, and such like things; you certainly had enough of mental vigour, if you had chosen

to have done so, to have stood out against the inconsistency of professors, and to have searched for yourselves. If all Christ's church were inconsistent, so long as there is a Bible upon earth, you could have no excuse in the day of judgment; for Christ was not inconsistent, and you are not asked to follow Christ's followers—you are asked to follow Christ himself. Until then you can find a flaw in *his* character, a mistake in *his* conduct, you have no right to fling the inconsistency of *his* followers in the teeth of Christ, nor to turn from him because his disciples forsake him and flee. To their own Master they stand or fall; they must bear their own burden, and you must bear yours too. "Every man shall bear his own burden," saith Scripture, "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account for the things which we have done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil." You will not be accountable for another man's sins, but for your own; and if another man by his sin has brought reproach upon Christ, still it shall be no excuse for you if you do not follow him wholly, in the midst of an evil generation.

II. With that, by way of caveat and guard, I shall now bring forth THE BAD SPIES. I wish that the men mentioned in the text, had been the only spies who have brought an evil report: it would have been a great mercy if the plague that killed them, had killed all the rest of the same sort; but alas! the breed, I am afraid, will never be extinct, and as long as the world endureth, there will be some professors who bring up an evil report of the land.

But now let me bring forth the evil spies. Remember, these spies are to be judged, not by what they say, but by *what they do*; for to a worldling, words are nothing—*acts* are everything. The reports that we bring of our religion are not the reports of the pulpit, not the reports that we utter with our lips, but the report of our daily life, speaking in our own houses, and the every day business of life.

Well, first, I produce a man who brings up an evil report of the land, and you will see at once that he does so, for *he is of a dull and heavy spirit*. If he preaches, he takes this text—"Through much tribulation we must inherit the kingdom." Somehow or other, he never mentions God's people, without calling them God's *tried* children. As for joy in the Lord, he looks upon it with suspicion. "Lord, what a wretched land is this!" is the very height of poetry to him. He could sing that always. He is always in the valley, where the mists are hovering; he never climbs the mountain's brow, to stand above the tempests of this life. He was gloomy before he made a profession of religion—since then he has become more gloomy still. See him at home. Ask the children what they think of their father's religion; they think they could wish their father was anything except religious. "Father will not let us laugh," they say; "he pulls the blinds down on the Sunday; he tries to make us as dark and miserable as he can on the Sabbath day; he thinks it his duty as a strict Sabbatarian, to make the Sabbath the greatest day of bondage out of the whole seven. Ask his wife what she thinks of religion: she says, 'I do not know much about it myself, but I wish my husband were a little more cheerful.'" "Nay, but is it his religion that makes him miserable?" "I do not know what it is," she says, "but I know when he is most miserable, he is generally most religious." Hear him pray: when he is on his knees he gives a long list of his trials and troubles; but he never says at the end, "More are they that are for us than all they that are against us." He usually dwells upon the valley of Baca, and about crying so much that he makes it a well. He never goes on to say, "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." No, it is just the black part of the story. If you want to see this brother in perfection, you must see him when he is talking to a young convert. The young man is full of joy and gladness, for he has found the Saviour, and, like a young fledgling that has just taken wing, he delights to fly about in the sunshine, and chirp merrily in the joy of his faith. "Ah!" says the old Christian, "the black ox has not trodden on your toes yet; you will have more troubles than you dream of." Old Mr. Timorous was a friend of mine: did you ever hear what he said to Christian, when he met him on his journey? I will tell you the same. "The lions! the lions! the lions!" he cries; he never says "The lions are chained." "The giants! the giants! the giants!" he exclaims. He never saith, "He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young." He takes always the dreary side of the question, bringing up an ill report of the land. And, do you know, some of these people are so proud of their ill report, that they form themselves into a little knot,

and they cannot hear any preacher except his face be of an extreme length, and except he has studied the dictionary to find all the most lugubrious terms, and except he appear unto men to fast, just like the Pharisees of old. Now, I do not hesitate to say that these men are evil spies. Far be it from us to mask the great fact that religion does entail tribulation, and that a Christian, like everybody else, must expect in this world to have trouble, for man is born to it as the sparks fly upward; but it is as false as God is true, that religion makes men miserable. So sure as God is good, his religion is good; and as God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works, religion is an atmosphere in which those tender mercies play, and the sea in which his lovingkindness swims. Oh, come, ye dreary professors, take away those storm-clouds, and wreath a few rainbows on your brow. Come, now, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast; take those harps from the willows; down with them, and now try if your unaccustomed fingers cannot make them alive with melody. And if you will not do it, and cannot do it, permit me to bear my testimony. I can say, concerning Christ's religion, if I had to die like a dog, and had no hope whatever of immortality, if I wanted to lead a happy life, let me serve my God with all my heart; let me be a follower of Jesus, and walk in his footsteps; for never was there a truer word spoken than that of Solomon, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." It is a land that floweth with milk and honey; there are clusters even on earth too heavy for one man to carry; there are fruits that have been found so rich that even angel lips have never been sweetened with more luscious wine; there are joys to be had here so fair that even cates ambrosial and the nectared wine of Paradise can scarce excel the sweets of satisfaction that are to be found in the earthly banquets of the Lord.

Perhaps, however, this poor man that I have just sent off is to be pitied. Not so the next one, for he is a rascal indeed. See him! he comes forward as Mr. Meek-face, making a great profession of religion. How he mouths the hymns! When he stands up to pray, with what a spiritual kind of voice he prays. Nothing carnal about his voice! He is among the Christian people a great leader. He can preach sermons by the yard. He can dissect doctrines by the hour. There is not a metaphysical point in all our theology that he does not understand,

"He can a hair divide,
Betwixt the west and north-west side."

His understanding is, in his own opinion, infinite; and he makes very boastful pretensions to piety. Everybody says when they see him in his good frames in chapel or elsewhere, "What a dear good man he is!" You follow him to business. He will not swear, but he will lie. He won't out-and-out rob, but he will cheat. He will not curse a man to his face, but he will do worse—he will speak ill of him behind his back. You watch him! He, if he could find a drunkard in the street, would upbraid him, and talk to him so proudly against the sin of intoxication, but he himself very seldom knows his own way upstairs to bed; only that is in a quiet way, therefore nobody sees it, and he is thought to be a very reputable member of society. Don't you know any such people? I hope you do not; but I have met with them. There is a great stock of them still living; men that make grand professions, and their lives are as much opposed to their professions, as hell is opposed to heaven. Now what does the world say of religion when they see these people? They say at once, "Well, if this be religion, we had better have none of it." Says the business man, "I could not do what So-and-so does; it is true I could not sing out of his hymn book, but I could not keep his cash book." We have known many men say, "I could not make so long a prayer as So-and-so, and could not make out my invoices in the dishonest way he does." We have met with worldly men who are far more honest as tradesman and professional men than persons who make a profession of religion. And we have known on the other hand, men who have made the greatest profession, indulging in all kinds of evil. Horrible shall be that man's fate, who thus ruins other men's souls by bringing up a bad report of the land. But, oh! I beseech you, my hearers, if any of you have seen such professors, let the righteous stand out to-day, like Joshua and Caleb of old; let the Church stand before you and rend its garments, while it entreats you not to believe the lying and slanderous reports of such men. For, indeed, religion is holy; as Christ is holy, even so do his people desire to be holy. And the grace of God which bringeth salvation is pure and peaceful;

it produces in men things that are holy and of good report, things that magnify God, and that make human nature appear glorious. But scarcely do I need to tell you that, in your own circle while you have met with hypocrites, you have met with men whom you could not doubt. Yes, you have sometimes seen even in your evil company, a man who was like an angel; you have felt as Satan did when Abdiel, the faithful among the faithless, stood forth, and would not turn a rebel to his God.

"Abashed the devil stood, and felt how awful goodness was."

I beseech you therefore, do not believe the ill report of the hypocrite, and the unholy man.

But there is a third class of professors who bring up a bad report of the land. And this I am afraid will affect us all; in some measure we must all plead guilty to it. The Christian man, although he endeavours uniformly to walk according to the law of Christ, finds still another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and consequently there are times when his witness is not consistent. Sometimes this witness is, "The Gospel is holy" for he is holy himself. But, alas with the very best of men, there are times when our witness contradicts our faith. When you see an angry Christian—and such a thing may be seen—and when you meet with a Christian who is proud, and such a thing has been known, when you catch a Christian overtaken in a fault, as you may sometimes do, then his testimony is not consistent. He contradicts then what he has at other times declared by his acts.

And here, I say again, I fear that all of us must plead guilty. We have sometimes by our actions put in words which seem to conflict with the general testimony of our lives. Oh! brothers and sisters, do not believe all that you see in us; and if sometimes you see a Christian man betrayed into a hasty or a wrong expression, do not set it down to our religion, set it down to our poor fallen humanity. If sometimes you should catch us overtaken by a fault, and we trust it shall be rarely enough you so see us, abuse us, but do not abuse our Master: say what you will concerning us, but do not, we beseech you, impute it to our religion, for saints are sinners still, and the most holy men have still to say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." But we do beseech you, when the madness of sin deludes us, do not believe the maunderings of our madness, but have regard to the general testimony of our lives, and that, we trust, you will find to be consistent with the gospel of Christ. I could bear to be abused, but I should not like to have the Master abused. I would rather have it believed that I was not a Christian at all, than allow any one to say that any faults I have were caused by my religion. No, Christ is holy; the gospel is pure and spotless. If at any time we seem to contradict that witness, do not believe us, I beseech you, but look into the matter for yourselves, for indeed it is a good land, a land which floweth with milk and honey.

III. Thus I have brought forth the evil spies who bring up a bad report; and now, thank God, we have some good spies too. But we will let them speak. Come Joshua and Caleb, we want your testimony; though you are dead and gone, you have left children behind you; and they, still grieved as you were at the evil report, rend their clothes, but they boldly stand to it that the land they have passed through is an exceeding good land.

One of the best spies I have ever met with is an *aged Christian*. I remember to have heard him stand up and tell what he thought of religion. He was a blind old man, who for twenty years had not seen the light of the sun. His grey locks hung from his brow, and floated over his shoulders. He stood up at the table of the Lord, and thus addressed us:—"Brethren and sisters, I shall soon be taken from you; in a few more months I shall gather up my feet upon my bed, and sleep with my fathers. I have not the tongue of the learned, nor the mind of the eloquent, but I desire before I go, to bear one public testimony to my God. Fifty and six years have I served him, and I have never found him once unfaithful. I can say 'Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and not one good thing hath failed of all the Lord God has promised.'" And there stood that old man, tottering into his tomb, deprived of the light of heaven naturally, and yet having the light of heaven in a better sense shining into his soul; and though he could not look upon us, yet did he turn himself, and seemed to say, "Young people,

trust God in early life, for I have not to regret that I sought him too soon. I have only to mourn that so many of my years ran to waste." There is nothing that more tends to strengthen the faith of the young believer than to hear the veteran Christian, covered with scars from the battle, testifying that the service of his Master is a happy service, and that if he could have served any other master he would not have done so, for his service was pleasant and his wages everlasting joy.

Take the testimony of the *sufferer*. "Behold that fragile form of delicate transparent beauty, whose light-blue eye and hectic cheek are lit by the bale-fires of decline, all droopingly she lieth, as a dew-laden lily, her flaxen tresses, rashly luxuriant, dank with unhealthy moisture." I have seen her when her eyes were sunk, when she could scarce be lifted out of the bed, when the frame was wearied of life; and I have seen her quite complacent, as she took her Bible from beneath her pillow and read, "Yea, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies." I have sat down and spoken to her, and have said to her, "Well, you have been in this sad place these many months. Do you find religion cheers you now?" "Oh, Sir," she has said, "what could I do without it? I cannot leave this bed; but it has been to me a couch of joy, where Christ has spread a banquet. He has made my bed in all my sickness; he has put his left hand under my head, and his right hand has embraced me; he has given me joy in my sorrows, and has prepared me to face death with a calm and unflinching countenance." Such a case bears witness to the Master. Like that of the grey-headed saint, it is an excellent report of this good land.

But we need not look to sick beds and to grey heads for the only witness. We know a Christian merchant; he is immersed in the cares of this life, and yet he always finds time to prepare for a world that is to come. He has as much business as any man in the city, and yet family prayer is never neglected. And perhaps you find him serving the office of civic magistrate—as was the case in one instance—and yet even on the day of banquet, he rises from his chair, in order that family worship may still be kept up in his house. He is known in business as one who is willing to help little tradesmen. He likes good securities, as other people do; but he will sometimes run a risk to help a rising man. When you go to him, you find him a sharp man of business, he is not to be taken in; but at the same time you will find him a man that will not take you in. You may trust him. Whatever the transaction may be, you have no need to look over the invoice if he has had anything to do with it. There will be no mistake there; or if there be a mistake, it will be palpably a mistake, and immediately confessed with the greatest possible sorrow, for he is upright in his dealings. There has come sometimes in his case an unhappy crisis, and when houses were tumbling, and bankrupts were as common as leaves upon the trees, he was not disturbed and distracted like other men, for his confidence was in his God, and his trust in the God of Jacob. He had some anxiety, but he had more faith; and when his prosperity returned to him, he dedicated part of his substance unto the Lord, not in a noisy way, so that it might appear in a report that So-and-so gave a hundred a year to a society, but he gave five hundred, and nobody knew of it. Men said of him in the Exchange and in the Market, "If there is a Christian, it is that man." When they saw him, they said, "There is something in religion. We have watched him; we have never found him trip or turn aside. We have always found him the same upright character, fearing his God, and fearing no man." Such a man brings up a good report of the land. I may talk here Sunday after Sunday, and every day in the week elsewhere, but I cannot preach in so forcible a way as you can, who by your actions are preaching to the world. Ah! and I cannot preach so well as those who are servants, who by their holy action in the midst of trial and difficulty have an opportunity to show what grace can do in the heart. Those are good spies who bring up a good report of the land.

And, my sisters, let me say a word to you. It is possible for you, too, to bring up a good report; not by neglecting your households in order to attend to visiting societies. Let visiting societies be attended to. God be thanked for them, for they are among the best institutions of our times. But I have known some people who would have been a great deal better employed in scrubbing their dressers, and seeing their servants wash up the tea things, than going out visiting the sick from house to house; for their house has run to riot, and their families have been quite

out of order, because the wife, like a foolish woman, was plucking everything down at home, while trying to do good abroad. We have known many true sisters of mercy, who are really blessed among women, and God shall bless them abundantly. We have known others who very seldom go out visiting the sick, but they are at home ordering their household. We have known an ungodly husband converted by a godly wife. I remember to have heard an instance of a man who had a wife of so excellent a disposition, that though he was a worldly, gay man, he used to boast in his gay company that he had got the best wife on earth. Said he, "You cannot put her into a passion. I go home late at night, in all sorts of trim, but she always receives me meekly, and I feel ashamed of myself every time I see her, for her holiness rebukes me. You may put her to any test you like, you will find her the best of women." "Well," said they, "let us all go to supper with you to-night." They did. In they rushed. She did not hint there was nothing in the house, though there was very little; but she and her maid set to with all their might, although it was past twelve o'clock, and very soon had supper, and she waited on them with all the grace of a duchess, seeming as glad to see them as if they were her friends, and had come at the most opportune time. And they began to tell how it was they had come, and asked her how it was she could bear it so patiently. She said, "God has given me a husband; I was not converted before I was married; but ever since I was converted, my first endeavour has been to bring my husband to know Jesus; and I am sure," said she, "he will never be brought to do so except by kindness." Her husband, through these words, after the company had gone, confessed how wrong he had acted to her; his heart was touched; next Sabbath he went to the house of God with her, and they became a happy couple, rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts. She was a good spy, and brought a good report of the land. I doubt not there are many women whose names will never be heard of on earth who will receive the Master's commendation at last, "She hath done what she could;" and when you have done what you can for Christ, by holy, patient, quiet meekness, you are good spies; you have brought a good report of the land.

And you servants, you can do the same. A religious servant girl ought to be the best servant anywhere. A religious shoeblack ought to black shoes better than anybody else. If there be a religious man who is set to clean knives, he ought to take care that he does not take the edge off. You know the negroes' piety in America is such, that a religious negro is worth many dollars more than another, and always sells well; so that the masters like them to get religious, because they are the men that do not rebel, but submit meekly and patiently, and the men who, finding themselves slaves, much as they may hate their position, yet regard one to be their master who is higher than all, and "not with eye service as men pleasers, but with singleness of heart," they endeavour to serve God.

IV. And now I want to press with all my might upon every professing Christian here, THE GREAT NECESSITY OF BRINGING OUT A UNIFORMLY GOOD TESTIMONY CONCERNING RELIGION. Brethren, I feel persuaded if Christ were here to-day, there are some of us who love him so well that we would turn our own cheek to the smiter, rather than he should be smitten. One of Napoleon's officers loved him so well that when a cannon ball was likely to smite the emperor, he threw himself in the way, in order that he might die as a sacrifice for his master. Oh Christian, you would do the same, I think. If Christ were here you would run between him and insult, yea, between him and death. Well, then, I am sure you would not wantonly expose Christ; but remember, every unguarded word you use, every inconsistent act, puts a slur on Christ. The world, you know, does not find fault with you—they lay it all to your Master. If you make a slip to-morrow, they will not say, "That is John Smith's human nature;" they will say, "That is John Smith's religion." They know better, but they will be sure to say it; they will be sure to put all the mischief at the door of Christ. Now, if you could bear the blame yourself you might bear it manfully; but do not allow Christ to bear the blame—do not suffer his escutcheon to be tarnished—do not permit his banner to be trampled in the dust.

Then there is another consideration. You must remember, if you do wrong, the world will be quite sure to notice you. The world carries two bags; in the bag at the back they put all the Christian's virtues—in the bag in front they put all our mistakes and sins. They never think of looking at the virtues of holy men; all the courage of martyrs, and all the fidelity of confessors, and all

the holiness of saints, is nothing to them; but our iniquities are ever before them. Please to recollect, that wherever you are, as a Christian, the eyes of the world are upon you; the Argus eyes of an evil generation follow you everywhere. If a church is blind the world is not. It is a common proverb, "As sound asleep as a church," and a very true one, for most churches are sound asleep; but it would be a great falsehood if anyone were to say, "As sound asleep as the world," for the world is never asleep. Sleeping is left to the church. And remember, too, that the world always wears magnifying glasses to look at Christians' faults. If a man trips who makes no profession, oh! it is nothing—you never hear of it; let a minister do it, let a christian professor do it, and then comes out the magnifying glass. It is nothing in anybody else, but it is a great sin in us. There are two codes of morality in the world, and it is very right there should be. If we make profession to be God's children, and to have God's grace in our hearts, it is no more wrong in the world to expect more of us than of others than it is for a gardener to expect his plants to grow more quickly on a hot-bed and under a glass-shade than he would out of doors in the cold frost. If we have more privileges, and more culture, and make more profession, we ought to live up to them, and the world is quite right in expecting us to do so.

There is another consideration I must offer you before I have done. Recollect, if you do not bring a good testimony for your religion, an evil testimony will defeat a great deal of good. All the saints in a church but one may be faithful to Christ, and the world will not honour the church for it; but let one professor in that church turn aside to sin, and you will hear of it for many a day. It is even so in nature. Take the days in the year. The sun rises and shines upon us, and we do not note it; all things continue as they were: the stars smile sweetly by night, and the day and night roll on in quiet; but there comes one day, a day of thunder and lightning, a day of earthquake and storm, and it is put on the rolls of our history, that such-and-such a remarkable day occurred at such-and-such a time. Why not note the good day? But so it is. The world will only note the evil. You may cross through a country, and you will notice a hundred fair rivers, like silver streams threaded with emeralds running through the pastures, who hears the sound of their waters, as they flow gently to the sea? But there is one precipitous rock, and a waterfall dashes there; you may hear that half a mile off. We never hear anything about the river St. Lawrence, in all its lengths and breadths; it is only the falls of Niagara that we hear of. And so the Christian may flow on in a steady course of life, unseen, unheard; but you are sure to hear of him, if he makes a fall. Be watchful, therefore; your Master cometh. Be watchful: the enemy is at hand even now. O may the Holy Spirit sanctify you wholly, that you may abound in every good work, to the glory of God!

As for you who fear not God, remember, if Christians do sin, that shall not be an excuse for you. Suppose a man you are dealing with says to you, "I cheated you, but I did not make any profession of being honest." You would tell him he was a confirmed rogue. Or if a man were taken before a magistrate, and were to say, "You need not put me in a prison, I never made a profession of being anything but a thief; I never said I would not break into people's chambers and get at their plate baskets!" The magistrate would say, "You speak honestly, but you are by your own confession a great rogue, and I will transport you for life, and you shall never have a ticket of leave." It will be of no use for you at the last day, to say that you never made a profession of wanting to go to heaven or to escape hell, of leaving sin and trusting in Christ. If you never made a profession of serving God, you may rest assured he will have short work with you. You have made no profession. O there is no judgment required. Depart! Thou didst make no profession of loving me, and now thou shalt have no possession of my glory. Depart, accursed, into everlasting fire. May the Lord deliver us from that, for Jesus' sake.

No. 199 and 200, which will be published next week, will contain the Two SERMONS preached on
KESON DOWN, by the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON, on Friday, June 11th, 1858. Price 2d.

JESUS WALKING ON THE SEA.

A Sabbath Morning Meditation,

PREACHED AT THE OXFORD ROAD CHAPEL, MAY 8TH, 1858.

BY THE

REV. EDWIN PAXTON HOOD.

"And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking on the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.—St. Mark vi. 45-53.

CHRIST walking to his disciples over the sea! That is my subject this morning. "Oh, thou afflicted—tossed with tempests and not comforted"—listen! It may be that even now the royal step of the Lord is upon the billows of thy sorrows, and that Jesus is hastening to meet thee! Thou to whom "the winds are contrary," what can be more natural than that here you should find yourself brought nigh to his presence and his power who "rebuked the winds and the seas!" How can it be but that in this company there are the children of doubt and of fear—the children of error and of folly—the children of the night and the storm. To such mostly I speak, "Be of good cheer." To all true hearts that love him, Jesus comes, as of old, walking on the sea, and saying, in his own clear, divine voice, rising over the surging tempest of life, "It is I, be not afraid."

I hope ever to hold it as one of the essential laws of our Lord's miracles, that they, in their mastery of the physical and the material world, are the symbols and the signs of what he is constantly doing

for us in the moral or the spiritual world. Thus I desire to see (and am able to see) my Lord doing wonders, and teaching us by his miracles still. Thus the story becomes to me a never-failing well of "strong consolation," and the token of an all-pervading action in the moral state.

Added to which I may say, how we love the relics of those we love! Indeed, the next best thing to the presence of our loved ones is something that belonged to them. Every thing they touched is precious; every thread, every lock of hair—nothing is mean; every thing is sanctified by their touch, is made precious. Memory does wonders with relics. And shall not every action of my Lord be a matter for me to ponder upon? Or is it true, as some have dared to tell me, rebuking me for too great a disposition to linger over the memory of Jesus, that his sentiment fades from the heart, as his doctrine and his truth, the power and the efficacy of his blood, and his sacrifice, rise on the understanding? Have you learned to feel reverence for every shadow of Jesus?—for every trace of his robe?—for every action of his life? Reverence and love are the gateways of all knowledge; and rely upon it you will not know him till you pass through them to him.

I. There are two or three preliminary words here which affect the conduct and intention of the miracle, and which this very spirit of love and reverence will compel us lovingly to ponder.

1. Do you think it was intentionless that we are told "*He constrained them to depart?*" Ah, seldom, indeed, did he constrain his disciples to leave him, and seldom does he thus constrain them to leave him. Now, alas! they need no constraining to leave him. But we may be sure that if he ever does thus constrain, it is that they may have some striking confirmation of *his* power, and *their* dependence. He constrained them to the separation. "It is needful for you that I go away." Yet the evening shadows were falling—night was even then closing in. It is so strange that the Master should leave us now. We need him most now. We have to cross the sea; and he!—when shall we behold him again? How will he reach the opposite side? We have seen him break the bread for the thousands, but surely even *he* cannot divide the waves; "for as yet they knew

not the Scripture, nor the power of God." "Master, abide with us." "Straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship and to go before him to the other side."

2. *From the Sea to the Mountains.* There was a lofty mountain chain, the sides of which were often trodden by Jesus. In fact, the mountain into which he ascended is the loftiest range of our world. Many men, holy men, have ranged its sides, but Christ alone has reached its loftiest peaks; that mountain along whose side Jesus was climbing, as the little boat put off from the shore. That mighty giant Andes of the soul is the mountain range of Prayer. "He went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come he was there alone." See, even Jesus fortified himself by ascending the lofty heights of prayer, and he came from divine communion to tread the deep beneath him; teaching us, surely, that we also can only master the elements of nature by our contact with heaven, and by laying hold of the strength of eternity.

And so the night came down, solemn and dark, trailing her black garments over the mountains and the sea! Night, dark and stormy upon the bosom of the lake—Night, dewy, and damp, and cold, upon those windy mountain peaks—yet, *there* continued he; and *yonder*, they. The Saviour was still among the hills, and they were still in their frail boats. Do you think they did not pray? Do you think they did not cry aloud through the darkness for Jesus? Do you think he did not hear them? He continued there in prayer. The dews fell on his garments, and bathed his locks. Still he continued on the mountains. He heard the winds roar and chafe angrily. He saw the little struggling bark. Be quiet, be comforted, faithless hearts, the Master sees you, and hears you; and, unhesitating and unrelenting, he will come to you in that moment which will best blend your salvation with his glory.

3. "*And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them walking on the sea.*"—"Walking on the sea." It is never difficult for me to see our Lord overcoming the strength of nature—it is never difficult, and it is always delightful. It is his appropriate right, and I love to hail it thus. Thus, then, after the prayer in token that "he learned obedience by the things he suffered;" at that hour, when night was at its darkest, although the morning would shortly break;

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at that hour he who among the mountains was a man ; re-assumed the imperial royalties of his Godhead, and came to them walking on the sea—On the sea ! Deep within its bosom lay the rocks, the grim and jagged jaws of darkness ; there, too, what tangled sea-weeds twined their long fingers in the ship-wrecked mariners' hair, and unsightly monsters plunged to and fro ; over all these he walks. The billows glance, and foam, and howl ; the surges lash the rocky shore and the frail bark ; but over these he walks. The night is very dark, the winds very high and contrary, the phosphorescent flakes play hither and thither ; over these he walks. They dread the wind and the tempest, and shiver as the sail screams, and the cordage creaks, and the mast bends ; but through the wind and over the storm, he walks—he treads the storm beneath him, the tempest knows him, the waves play round the feet of their Master, “by whom all things subsist.” The tempest that rocks their vessel will not ruffle his robe, or lift his hair. “Thy way, O God, is on the sea ; thy pathway on the deep waters, and thy footsteps are not known.”

II. And now, leaving the more literal story, let me point you to the more hidden, and yet certain significance, of our Lord's miraculous energy. You have often noticed (and noticed to receive a rich consolation) that the trials of faith are represented to us as seas, and waters, and rivers ; and God is spoken of as coming to us *over* them, or *through* them. Israel of old was not allowed to pass from Egypt to Canaan without passing through the Red Sea, and that history, as it was representational, so it became to every Hebrew poet full of promise and lofty allusion—“He led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the waters before them to make himself an everlasting name.” “He led them through the deep as an horse in the wilderness that they should not stumble.” “Thou,” says the Psalmist, “didst divide the sea by thy strength ; thou breakest the heads of the dragons in the waters ; thou didst cleave the fountain of the flood ; thou driest up the mighty rivers.” “Was the Lord displeased against the rivers ?” says Habakuk ; “was thine anger against the rivers ? was thy wrath against the sea that thou didst ride upon thy horses and chariots of salvation ? The mountains saw thee, and they trembled ; the overflowing of the water passed by ; the deep uttered his voice and

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lifted up his hands on high." Now, I read in all this the presence—the perpetual presence of the Lord Jesus in all times of spiritual desolation and sorrow. "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee." "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found; surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh him." So impossible is it to reach our kingdom without passing through the rivers and the seas, that it may be said he hath "founded it on the seas, and established it on the floods."

In all ages the Lord "*has constrained his Disciples and followers to put to sea,*" but it has always been that in these wanderings over the fearful and wild Atlantic they might meet with him, as they never could meet with him until danger had excited all their fears, and that they might cast a more secure and steady anchor on the Rock of Ages. Thus he constrained Noah to wander lonely in that ark over the waters of a perished world; thus he met with our fathers in the midst of those awful sands and deserts, more dreadful, if possible, than the ocean, and declared himself to be the "God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob;" thus for his own purpose he breathed on the winds around the vessel in which the prophet Jonah was flying from the presence of the Lord; thus he constrained Paul to take ship and to pass through the stormy Euroclydons; and thus he walked by the side of that vessel, and for his sake "gave him all that sailed with him;" and thus we, in life's later age, do know, that, if he has often constrained us to put to sea, he has met us on the sea; and we never tire of singing such words as "God moves in a mysterious way"—"By prayer let me wrestle"—"Give to the winds thy fears"—

"Through waves, through clouds, and storms he gladly clears thy way—
Wait Him His time so shall thy night soon end in joyous day."

Jesus walks with us on the sea!

1. *On the Sea of Human Passion.* There is none like Jesus for calming passion. Our passions are a troubled sea, and will not rest; and as long as they rage they will not let us rest. Hence, "The wicked is like a troubled sea." Hence, David poured forth that plaintive prayer—"Save me, O God, for the waters are come into my soul; I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am come into deep

water, where the floods overflow me." Thus, in the time of passion, when the blood stirs with the wild excitement of sin, when the fever is in the blood, cry to Jesus and he will come and walk upon the waters; when sin will not let thee rest, when thy pillow is drenched with the tears of disappointed hope or love, cry aloud to Jesus, and you shall see him come a spiritual presence. Oh! very beautiful is the calm of the sea after a storm at early morning or evening—the silence of the woods after the thunders and the lightnings have spent their fury—but what is Nature's calmest calm compared with that peace when the winds of passion have ceased to play through the soul, and Jesus rising a Sun of Righteousness over the waters says, "It is I be not afraid, only believe!"

2. *And Jesus walks over the seas of Temptation, too.* In the hour, when fearful of losing his prey, "the enemy comes in like a flood," and the powers of darkness ally themselves with the baser parts of man's nature. Wonderful are those words of David; and their wailing, but encouraging refrain—"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God," Psalm xlii. 7-11. Dear friends, in temptation have you ever tried the effect of prayer? Have you noticed how gradually Jesus seems to approach us—to advance to us as we stretched out our hands to him through the light?—"And he made, as though he would have gone farther," says Mark, in giving an account of this sacred vision of our text. So to us it has seemed as if he would have gone by us; but no, we feel his advancing strength. He is, indeed, coming to us walking on the sea. Oh! young friends, I prophecy to you that the time will come in your Christian history when "the rains will descend, and the floods beat, and the winds blow." Oh! in that

hour, when you pour out all your spirit in the prayer, "Save, Lord or I perish," may it be given to you to behold Jesus coming to you as to his disciples—walking on the sea.

3. *And, once again, Jesus walks on the Sea of Circumstantial Affliction.*—I have already given to you those 'golden promises—"When thou walkest through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; surely in the floods of great water it shall not come nigh thee." Jesus does not take his disciples from the waves; but, if he makes their roughness a pathway for his calm presence, and the light afflictions, which are but for a moment, to be the winds which waft them into eternal habitations, who can complain? Thus Jesus is always, every day, and every hour of every day, meeting his chosen ones. Have we not heard him and seen him? What shall we, what can we do now? Our property has left us, and we seem likely to be ruined; our health has left us, and we shall soon leave our family shelterless; our foes have been mighty. We said, "we shall surely fall by the hand of this Saul." Our darlings have left us and gone to their rest. "All these things have been against us." But, then, we heard him—his voice piercing through the night air, his hand pointing to the rising sun, and his robes making a glory over the gloom—say "It is I, be not afraid."

4. *And finally there is a wide black sea over which we all must spread our sail.*—Yes, Jesus will constrain us to put to that sea—"How wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?" How will your boat rock then upon the troubled waves? Dreadful! if Jesus comes not; but if he, coming over those black waters, crimsoning them with his blood; and if he shall draw nigh to us, then the storm fiend that rides the billow will have no power over us. "Immediately we shall be at the land." And then they "steer into port, the storm all weathered and the ocean crossed!" The time will indeed come when life will lose for all of us all its rainbow lights. We shall remember the calm of our early days, and shrink and shiver in the storm. Then, in the last water of Time, may we see Jesus coming by his own mighty and all prevailing death walking on the waves of Death, and pointing to the dawning day. Be sure if in every trial you see Jesus walking on the sea, you will not fail to see him then.

“HAVELOCK: THE BROAD STONE OF HONOUR.”

BY THE REV. EDWIN PAXTON HOOD.

[EXTRACT.]

INFERIOR men, who can think, and survey, but never feel, will last, when the sensitive spirit breaks down beneath the force and pressure of its own convictions. But to us he will seem, and to fame he will seem, ever young. Death sets the seal upon the man; hence from of old came the lesson—Call no man happy till he is dead. The last moment of life seals a man's reputation. How illustriously closed that evening! Amidst storm and lightning he made his transit to heaven, Elijah-like, in his chariot of fire. He left to earth his wasted body, tired by age, by toil, by watching, and drenching, and thirst, and famine. There, in future ages, on that soil, pilgrim feet shall turn reverently to the spot where the monumental marble shall lock within its gates all that the tomb can claim as its trophy. Meantime, “I heard a voice from heaven saying to me—Write, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.” That grave needs but little to hallow it as a martyr's shrine. Rest, venerated body, rest! Rest, beautiful and beloved spirit, too! Rest, thou saintly soldier—“Behold, we count them happy which endure.” Posterity will twine for thy memory the unfading palm; and history, with reverent finger, pause to notice where the descendant of the lion-hearted, heavenly-minded puritans fell on India's plains. But what is that to thee? *Thou* hast already entered on thine inheritance of “glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life.” Henceforth, there is laid up for thee a crown of righteousness, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for thee.” Farewell! thou great heart. Rest, saintly Soldier; rest, Warrior; rest, Missionary, and Hero, and Warrior in one. Denied the jewelled sword, the triumphal arch, a grateful people might have awarded thee, thou hast “entered through the gates into the city.” Denied the coronet, thou hast the crown—the fadeless and incorruptible crown.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE HEAVENLY RACE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 11, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

ON THE GRAND STAND, EPSOM RACE-COURSE.

"So run, that ye may obtain."—1 Cor. ix. 24.

WE are continually insisting upon it from day to day, that salvation is not of works, but of grace. We lay this down as one of the very first doctrines of the gospel. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." But we find, that it is equally necessary to preach the absolute necessity of a religious life for the attainment of heaven at last. Although we are sure that men are not saved for the sake of their works, yet are we equally sure that no man will be saved without them; and that he who leads an unholy life, who neglects the great salvation, can never inherit that crown of life which fadeth not away. In one sense, true religion is wholly the work of God; yet there are high and important senses in which we must ourselves "strive to enter in at the strait gate." We must run a race; we must wrestle even to agony; we must fight a battle, before we can inherit the crown of life. We have in our text the course of religion set down as a race; and inasmuch as there be many who enter upon a profession of religion, with very false motives, the apostle warns us that although all run in a race, yet all do not obtain the prize: they run all, but only one is rewarded: and he gives us, therefore, the practical exhortation to run that we may obtain; for unless we are the winners we had better not have been runners at all; for he that is not a winner is a loser; he who makes a profession of religion, and does not at last obtain the crown of life, is a loser by his profession; for his profession was hypocrisy or else formality, and he had better not have made a profession, than fall therein.

And now, in entering upon the text, I shall have to notice *what it is we are to run for*: "So run that ye may obtain;" secondly, *the mode of running*, to which we must attend—"So run that ye may obtain;" and then I shall give a few *practical exhortations*, to stir those onward in the heavenly race who are flagging and negligent, in order that they may at last "obtain."

I. In the first place, then, WHAT IS IT THAT WE OUGHT TO SEEK TO OBTAIN?

Some people think they must be religious, *in order to be respectable*. There are a vast number of people in the world who go to church and to chapel, because everybody else does so. It is disreputable to waste your Sundays, not to be found going up to the house of God; therefore they take a pew and attend the services, and they think they have done their duty: they have obtained all that they sought for, when they can hear their neighbours saying, "Such-and-such a man is a very respectable person; he is always very regular at his church; he is a very reputable person, and exceedingly praiseworthy." Verily, if this be what you seek after in your religion, you shall get it; for the Pharisees who sought the praise of men "had their reward." But when you have gotten it, what a poor reward it is! Is it worth the drudgery? I do not believe that the drudgery to which people submit in order to be called respectable, is at all compensated by what they gain. I am sure, for my own part, I would not care a solitary rap what I was called, or what I was thought; nor would I perform anything that was irksome to myself for the sake of pleasing any man that ever walked beneath the stars, however great or mighty he may be. It is the sign of a fawning, cringing spirit, when people are always seeking to do that which renders them respectable. The esteem of men is not worth the looking after, and sad it is, that this should be the only prize which some men put before them, in the poor religion which they undertake.

There are other people who go a little farther: they are not content with being considered respectable, but they want something more; *they desire to be considered pre-eminently saints*. These persons come to our places of worship, and after a little time they venture to come forward and ask whether they may unite with our churches. We examine them, and so hidden is their hypocrisy that we cannot discover its rottenness: we receive them into our churches; they sit at the Lord's Supper; they come to our church-meetings: mayhap, they are even voted into the deacon's office; sometimes they attain to the pulpit, though God has never called them, and preach what they have never felt in their hearts. Men may do all this merely to enjoy the praise of men; and they will even undergo some persecution for the sake of it; because to be thought a saint, to be reckoned by religious people to be everything that is right and proper, to have a name among the living in Zion, is to some persons a thing exceedingly coveted. They would not like to be set down among the "chief of sinners," but if they may have their names written among the chief of saints they will consider themselves exceedingly exalted. I am afraid we have a considerable admixture of persons of this sort in our churches who only come for the mere sake of keeping up their religious pretensions and obtaining a religious status in the midst of the church of God. "Verily, I say unto you, *they have their reward,*" and they shall never have any but what they obtain here. They get their reward for a little time; for a short time they are looked up to; but perhaps even in this life they make a trip, and down they go; the church discovers them, and they are sent out like the ass stripped of the lion's skin to browse once more among their native nettles, no longer to be glorious in the midst of the church of the living God. Or mayhap, they may wear the cloak until the last day of their lives, and then death comes, and strips them of all their tinsel and gewgaw; and they who acted upon the stage of religion as kings and princes, are sent behind the stage to be unrobed and to find themselves beggars to their shame, and naked to their eternal disgrace. It is not this which you and I would seek after in religion. Dearly beloved, if we do run the race, we would run for a higher and more glorious prize than any of these things.

Another set of people take up with religious life *for what they can get by it*. I have known tradespeople attend church for the mere sake of getting the custom of those who went there. I have heard of such things as people knowing which side their bread was buttered, and going to that particular denomination, where they thought they could get the most by it. Loaves and fishes drew some of Christ's followers, and they are very attracting baits, even to this day. Men find there is something to be gotten by religion. Among the poor it is, perhaps, some little charity to be obtained, and among those that are in business, it is the custom which they think to get. "Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward;" for the church is ever foolish and unsuspecting. We do not like to suspect our fellow creatures of following us from sordid motives. The church does not like to think that a man would be base enough to pretend to religion for the mere sake of what he can get; and, therefore, we let these people easily slip through, and they have their reward. But ah! at what a price they buy it! They have deceived the Lord's servants for gold, and they have entered into his church as base hypocrites for the sake of a piece of bread; and they shall be thrust out at last with the anger of God behind them, like Adam driven out of Eden, with the flaming Cherubim with a sword turning every way to keep the tree of life; and they shall for ever look back upon this as the most fearful crime they have committed—that they pretended to be God's people when they were not, and entered into the midst of the fold when they were but wolves in sheep's clothing.

There is yet another class, and when I have referred to them I will mention no more. These are the people who take up with religion for the sake of *quieting their conscience*; and it is astonishing how little of religion will sometimes do that. Some people tell us that if in the time of storm men would pour bottles of oil upon the waves, there would be a great calm at once. I have never tried it, and it is most probable I never shall, for my organ of credulity is not large enough to accept so extensive a statement. But there are some people who think that they can calm the storm of a troubled conscience by pouring a little of the oil of a profession about religion upon it; and it is amazing how wonderful an effect this really has. I have known a man who was drunk many times in a week, and who got his money dishonestly, and yet he always had an easy conscience by going to his church or chapel regularly on the Sunday. We have heard of a man who could "devour widows' houses"—a lawyer who could swallow up everything that came in his way, and yet he would never go to bed without saying his prayers; and that stilled his conscience. We have heard of other persons, especially among the Romanists, who would not object to thieving, but who would regard eating anything but a

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on a Friday as a most fearful sin, supposing that by making a fast on the Friday, all the iniquities of all the days in the week would be put away. They want the outward forms of religion to keep the conscience quiet; for Conscience is one of the worst lodgers to have in your house when he gets quarrelsome: there is no abiding with him; he is an ill bed-fellow; ill at lying down, and equally troublesome at rising up. A guilty conscience is one of the curses of the world: it puts out the sun, and takes away the brightness from the moonbeam. A guilty conscience casts a noxious exhalation through the air, removes the beauty from the landscape, the glory from the flowing river, the majesty from the rolling floods. There is nothing beautiful to the man that has a guilty conscience. He needs no accusing; everything accuses him. Hence people take up with religion just to quiet them. They take the sacrament sometimes; they go to a place of worship; they sing a hymn now and then; they give a guinea to a charity; they intend to leave a portion in their will to build alms-houses; and in this way conscience is lulled asleep, and they rock him to and fro with religious observances, till there he sleeps while they sing over him the lullaby of hypocrisy, and he wakes not until he shall wake with that rich man who was here clothed in purple, but in the next world did lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments, without a drop of water to cool his burning tongue.

What, then, is it, for which we ought to run in this race? Why heaven, eternal life, justification by faith, the pardon of sin, acceptance in the beloved, and glory everlasting. If you run for anything else than salvation, should you win, what you have won is not worth the running for. Oh! I beseech every one of you, make sure work for eternity; never be contented with anything less than a living faith in a living Saviour; rest not until you are certain that the Holy Spirit is at work in your souls. Do not think that the outside of religion can be of use to you: it is just the inward part of religion that God loveth. Seek to have a repentance that needeth not to be repented of—a faith which looks alone to Christ, and which will stand by you when you come into the swellings of Jordan. Seek to have a love which is not like a transient flame, burning for a moment and then extinguished; but a flame which shall increase and increase, and still increase, till your heart shall be swallowed up therein, and Jesus Christ's one name shall be the sole object of your affection. We must, in running the heavenly race, set nothing less before us than that which Christ did set before him. He set the joy of salvation before himself, and then he did run, despising the cross and enduring the shame. So let us do; and may God give us good success, that by his good Spirit we may attain unto eternal life, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord!

II. Thus have I noticed what it is we are to run for. And now the Apostle says, "So run that ye may obtain." I shall notice some people who never will obtain, and tell you the reason why, and in so doing, I shall be illustrating THE RULES OF THE RACE.

There are some people who certainly never will obtain the prize, because they are not even *entered*. Their names are not down for the race, and therefore it is quite clear that they will not run, or if they do run, they will run without having any warrant whatever for expecting to receive the prize. There are some such here this afternoon: who will tell you themselves, "We make no profession, sir—none whatever." It is quite as well, perhaps, that you do not; because if you did, you would be hypocrites, and it is better to make no profession at all than to be hypocrites. Still, recollect, your names are not down for the race, and therefore you cannot win. If a man tells you in business that he makes no profession of being honest, you know that he is a confirmed rogue. If a man makes no profession of being religious, you know what he is—he is irreligious—he has no fear of God before his eyes, he has no love to Christ, he has no hope of heaven. He confesses it himself. Strange that men should be so ready to confess this. You don't find persons in the street willing to acknowledge that they are confirmed drunkards. Generally a man will repudiate it with scorn. You never find a man saying to you, "I don't profess to be a chaste living man." You don't hear another say, "I don't profess to be anything but a covetous wretch." No; people are not so fast about telling their faults: and yet you hear people confess the greatest fault to which man can be addicted: they say, "I make no profession"—which means just this—that they do not give God his due. God has made them, and yet they won't serve him; Christ hath come into the world to save sinners, and yet they will not regard him; the gospel is preached; and yet they will not hear it; they have the Bible in their houses, and yet they will not attend to its admonitions; they make no profession of doing so. It will be short work with them at the last great day. There will be no need for the books to be opened, no need for a long deliberation in the verdict. They do not profess to be pardoned;

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their guilt is written upon their own foreheads, their brazen shamelessness shall be seen by the whole world, as a sentence of destruction written upon their very brows. You cannot expect to win heaven unless your names are entered for the race. If there be no attempts whatever made, even at so much as a profession of religion, then of course you may just sit down and say, "Heaven is not for me; I have no part nor lot in the inheritance of Israel; I cannot say that my Redeemer liveth; and I may rest quite assured that Tophet is prepared of old for me. I must feel its pains and know its miseries; for there are but two places to dwell in hereafter, and if I am not found on the right hand of the Judge, there is but one alternative—namely, to be cast away for ever into the blackness of darkness."

Then there is another class whose names are down, but they *never started right*. A bad start is a sad thing. If in the ancient races of Greece or Rome a man who was about to run for the race had loitered, or if he had started before the time, it would not matter how fast he ran if he did not start in order. The flag must drop before the horse starts; otherwise, even if it reach the winning post first, it shall have no reward. There is something to be noted, then, in the starting of the race. I have known men run the race of religion with all their might, and yet they have lost it because they did not start right. You say, "Well, how is that?" Why, there are some people who on a sudden leap into religion. They get it quickly, and they keep it for a time, and at last they lose it because they did not get their religion the right way. They have heard that before a man can be saved, it is necessary that, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, he should feel the weight of sin, that he should make a confession of it, that he should renounce all hope in his own works, and should look to Jesus Christ alone. They look upon all these things as unpleasant preliminaries and therefore, before they have attended to repentance, before the Holy Spirit has wrought a good work in them, before they have been brought to give up everything and trust to Christ, they make a profession of religion. This is just setting up in business without a stock in trade, and there must be a failure. If a man has no capital to begin with, he may make a fine show for a little time, but it shall be as the crackling of thorns under a pot, a great deal of noise and much light for a little time, but it shall die out in darkness. How many there are who never think it necessary that there should be heart work within! Let us remember, however, that there never was a true new birth without much spiritual suffering; that there never was a man who had a changed heart without his first having a miserable heart. We must pass through that black tunnel of conviction before we can come out upon the high embankment of holy joy; we must first go through the Slough of Despond before we can run along the walls of Salvation. There must be ploughing before there is sowing; there must be many a frost, and many a sharp shower, before there is any reaping. But we often act like little children who pluck flowers from the shrubs and plant them in their gardens without roots; then they say how fair and how pretty their little garden is; but wait a little while, and all their flowers are withered, because they have no roots. This is all the effect of not having a right start, not having the "root of the matter." What is the good of outward religion, the flower and the leaf of it, unless we have the "root of the matter" in us—unless we have been digged into by that sharp iron spade of conviction, and have been ploughed with the plough of the Spirit, and then have been sown with the sacred seed of the gospel, in the hope of bringing forth an abundant harvest? There must be a good start; look well to that, for there is no hope of winning unless the start be right.

Again, there are some runners in the heavenly race who cannot win because they *carry too much weight*. A light weight, of course, has the advantage. There are some people who have an immensely heavy weight to carry. "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven!" What is the reason? Because he carries so much weight; he has so much of the cares and pleasures of this world; he has such a burden that he is not likely to win, unless God should please to give him a mighty mass of strength to enable him to bear it. We find many men willing to be saved, as they say; they receive the word with great joy, but by-and-bye thorns spring up and choke the word. They have so much business to do; they say they must live; they forget they must die. They have such a deal to attend to, they cannot think of living near to Christ. They find they have little time for devotions; morning prayer must be cut short, because their business begins early; they can have no prayer at night, because business keeps them so late. How can they be expected to think of the things of God? They have so much to do to answer this question—"What shall I eat? what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" It is true they read in the Bible that their Father who is in heaven will take care of them in these things if they will trust

him. But they say, "Not so." Those are enthusiasts according to their notions who rely upon providence. They say, the best providence in all the world is hard work; and they say rightly; but they forget that into the bargain of their hard work "it is in vain to rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness; for except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." You see two men running a race. One of them, as he starts, lays aside every weight; he takes off his garment and away he runs. There goes the other poor fellow; he has a whole load of gold and silver upon his back. Then around his loins he has many distrustful doubts about what shall become of him in the future, what will be his prospects when he grows old, and a hundred other things. He does not know how to roll his burden upon the Lord. See how he flags, poor fellow, and how the other distances him, leaves him far behind, has gained the corner, and is coming to the winning post. It is well for us if we can cast everything away except that one thing needful, and say, "This is my business, to serve God on earth, knowing that I shall enjoy him in heaven." For when we leave our business to God, we leave it in better hands than if we took care of it ourselves. They who carve for themselves generally cut their fingers; but they who leave God to carve for them, shall never have an empty plate. He who will walk after the cloud shall go aright, but he who will run before it shall soon find that he has gone a fool's errand. "Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that wait upon the Lord shall not want any good thing." Our Saviour said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them; are ye not much better than they?" "Trust in the Lord and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed." "His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Carry the weight of this world's cares about you, and it will be as much as you can do to carry them and to stand upright under them, but as to running a race with such burdens, it is just impossible.

There is also another thing that will prevent man's running the race. We have known people who stopped on their way to *kick their fellows*. Such things sometimes occur in a race. The horse, instead of speeding onwards to the mark, is of an angry disposition, and sets about kicking those that are running beside him—there is not much probability of his coming in first. "Now they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize." There is one however who never gets it, and that is the man who always attends to his fellow-creatures instead of himself. It is a mysterious thing that I never yet saw a man with a hoe on his shoulder, going to hoe his neighbour's garden; it is a rarity to see a farmer sending his team of horses to plough his neighbour's land; but it is a most singular thing that every day in the week I meet with persons who are attending to other people's character. If they go to the house of God, and hear a trite thing said, they say at once "How suitable that was for Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Brown?" The thought never enters their head, how suitable it was to themselves. They lend their ears to everybody else, but they do not hear for themselves. When they get out of chapel, perhaps as they walk home, their first thought is, "Well, how can I find fault with my neighbours?" They think that putting other people down is going up themselves (there never was a greater mistake); that by picking holes in their neighbour's coat they mend their own. They have so few virtues of their own that they do not like anybody else to have any, therefore they do the best they can to despoil everything good in their neighbour; and if there be a little fault, they will look at it through a magnifying glass; but they will turn the glass the other way when they look at their own sins. Their own faults become exceedingly small while those of others become magnificently great. Now this is a fault not only among professing religious men, but among those who are not religious. We are all so prone to find fault with other people instead of attending to our own home affairs. We attend to the vineyards of others, but our own vineyard we have not kept. Ask a worldly man why he is not religious, and he tells you "Because so-and-so makes a profession of religion and is not consistent." Pray is that any business of yours? To your own Master you must stand or fall, and so must he; God is their judge, and not you. Suppose there are a great many inconsistent Christians—and we are compelled to acknowledge that there are—so much the more reason why you should be a good one. Suppose there are a great many who deceive others; so much the more

reason why you should set the world an example of what a genuine Christian is. "Ah! but," you say, "I am afraid there are very few." Then why don't you make one? But, after all, is that your business? Must not every man bear his own burden? You will not be judged for other men's sins, you will not be saved by their faith, you will not be condemned for their unbelief. Every man must stand in his own proper flesh and blood at the bar of God, to account for the works done in his own body, whether they have been good or whether they have been evil. It will be of little avail for you to say at the day of judgment, "O Lord, I was looking at my neighbours; O Lord, I was finding fault with the people in the village; I was correcting their follies." But thus saith the Lord: "Did I ever commission thee to be a judge or a divider over them? Why, if thou hadst so much time to spare, and so much critical judgment, didst thou not exercise it upon thyself? Why didst thou not examine thyself, so that thou mightest have been found ready and acceptable in the day of God?" These persons are not very likely to win the race, because they turn to kicking others.

Again, there is another class of persons who will not win the race—namely, those who, although they seem to start very fair, very soon *loiter*. They dart ahead at the first starting, and distance all the others. There they fly away as if they had wings to their heels; but a little further on in the race, it is with difficulty that with whip and spur they are to be kept going at all, and they almost come to a stand still. Alas! this race of persons are to be discovered in all our churches. We get young people who come forward and make a profession of religion, and we talk with them, and we think it is all well with them; and for a little while they do run well; there is nothing wanting in them; we could hold them up as patterns for the imitation of others. Wait a couple of years; they drop off just by little and little. First, perhaps, there is the attendance on a week-day service neglected; then it is altogether discontinued; then one service at Sabbath; then perhaps family prayer, then private prayer—one thing after another is given up, until at last the whole edifice which stood upright and looked so fair, having been built upon the sand, gives way before the shock of time, and down it falls, and great is the ruin thereof. Recollect, it is not starting that wins the race; it is running all the way. He that would be saved, must hold on to the end: "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." Stop and loiter in the race before you have come to the end thereof, and you have made one of the greatest mistakes that could possibly occur. On, on, on! while you live; still onward, onward, onward! for until you come to the grave, you have not come to your resting place until you arrive at the tomb, you have not come to the spot where you may cry "Halt!" Ever onward if ye would win. If you are content to lose; if you would lose your own soul, you may say, "Stop," if you please; but if you would be saved evermore, be on, on, till you have gained the prize.

But there is another class of persons, who are worse than these. They start well too, and they run very fast at first, but at last they leap over the posts and rails; they go quite out of the course altogether, and you do not know where they are gone. Every now and then, we get such people as this. They go out from us, because they were not of us, for had they been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us. I might point out in my congregation on the Sabbath-day, a man whom I saw start myself. I saw him running so well, I almost envied him the joy he seemed always able to preserve, the faith which ever seemed to be so buoyant and full of jubilee. Alas! just when we thought he was speeding onwards to the prize, some temptation crossed his path, and he turned aside. Away he is scrambling far over the heath, out of the path of right, and men say, "Aha! aha! so would we have it; so would we have it." And they laugh and make merriment over him, because, having once named the name of Jesus Christ, he hath afterwards gone back again, and his last end is worse than the first. Those whom God starts never do this, for they are preserved in Christ Jesus. Those who have been "entered" in the great roll of the Covenant before all eternity shall persevere, by the aid of the good Spirit. He that began the good work in them, shall carry it on even unto the end. But, alas! there are many who run on their own account and in their own strength; and they are like the snail, which as it creeps, leaves its life as a trail upon its own path. They melt away; their nature decayeth; they perish, and where are they? Not in the church, but lost to all hope. They are like the dog that returned to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. "The last end of that man shall be worse than the first."

I do not think I shall now mention any other class of persons. I have brought before you the rules of the race, if you would win; if you would "so run that you may obtain," you must first of all take care to start well; you must keep to the

course; you must keep strait on; you must not stop on the road, or turn aside from it, but, urged on by Divine grace, you must ever fly onwards, "like an arrow from the bow, shot by an archer strong." And never rest until the march is ended, and you are made pillars in the house of your God, to go out no more for ever.

III. But now I am about to give you some few reasons to URGE YOU ONWARD IN THE HEAVENLY RACE—those of you who are already running.

One of my reasons shall be this—"We are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses." When zealous racers on yonder heath are flying across the plain, seeking to obtain the reward, the whole heath is covered with multitudes of persons, who are eagerly gazing upon them, and no doubt the noise of those who cheer them onward, and the thousand eyes of those who look upon them, have a tendency to make them stretch every nerve, and press with vigour on. It was so in the games to which the apostle alludes. There the people sat on raised platforms, while the racers ran before them, and they cried to them, and the friends of the racers urged them forward, and the kindly voice would ever be heard bidding them go on. Now, Christian brethren, how many witnesses are looking down upon you. Down! do I say? It is even so. From the battlements of heaven the angels look down upon you, and they seem to cry to-day to you with sweet, silvery voice, "Ye shall reap if ye faint not; ye shall be rewarded if ye continue steadfast in the work and faith of Christ." And the saints look down upon you—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; martyrs and confessors, and your own pious relatives who have ascended to heaven, look down upon you; and if I might so speak, methinks sometimes you might hear the clapping of their hands when you have resisted temptation and overcome the enemy; and you might see their suspense when you are lagging in the course, and you might hear their friendly word of caution as they bid you gird up the loins of your mind, and lay aside every weight, and still speed forward; never resting to take your breath, never staying for a moment's ease till you have attained the flowery beds of heaven, where you may rest for ever. And recollect, these are not the only eyes that are looking upon you. The whole world looks upon a Christian: he is the observed of all observers. In a Christian every fault is seen. A worldly man may commit a thousand faults, and nobody notices him; but let a Christian do so, and he will very soon have his faults published to the wide world. Everywhere men are looking at Christians, and it is quite right that they should do so. I remember a young man, a member of a Christian church, who went to a public-house ball of the lowest character; and he was no sooner mounting up the stairs, than one of them said, "Ah! here comes the Methodist; we will give it to him." As soon as they had him in the room, they first of all lead him up and down to let everybody see the Methodist who had come among them, and then they kicked him down stairs. I sent them my respectful compliments for doing so, for it served him right; and I took care that he was kicked down stairs in another sense afterwards, and kicked out of the church. The world would not have him and the church would not have him. The world, then, looks upon you; it never misses an opportunity of throwing your religion in your teeth. If you don't give sixteen ounces to the pound of morality, if you don't come up to the mark in everything, you will hear of it again. Don't think the world is ever asleep. We say, "as sound asleep as a church," and that is a very good proverb; but we cannot say, "as sound asleep as the world," for it never sleeps; it always has its eyes open; it is always watching us in all we do. The eyes of the world are upon you. "We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses;" "let us run with patience the race that is set before us." And there are darker and yet more malignant eyes that scowl upon us. There are spirits that people this air, who are under the prince of the power of the air, who watch every day for our halting.

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth,
Both when we wake and when we sleep."

And alas! those spiritual creatures are not all good. There be those that are not yet chained and reserved in darkness, but who are permitted by God to wander through this world like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour, ever ready to tempt us. And there is one at the head of them called Satan, the enemy, and you know his employment. He has access to the throne of God, and he makes most horrid use of it, for he accuses us day and night before the throne. The accuser of the brethren is not yet cast down—that is to be in the great day of the triumph of the Son of Man; but as Jesus stands our Advocate before the throne, so does old Satan first watch us and tempt us, and then stands as our accuser before the bar

of God. O my dear brothers and sisters, if you have entered into this race, and have commenced it, let these many eyes urge you forward.

"A cloud of witnesses around
Hold thee in full survey;

Forget the steps already trod,
And onward urge thy way."

And now a more urgent consideration still. Recollect, your race is win or lose—death or life, hell or heaven, eternal misery or everlasting joy. What a stake that is for which you run! If I may so put it, you are running for your life; and if that does not make a man run nothing will. Put a man there on yonder hill, and put another after him with a drawn sword seeking his life. If there is any *man* in him you will soon see him run; there will be no need for us to shout out to him, "Run, man, run!" for he is quite certain that his life is at hazard, and he speeds with all his might—speeds till the veins stand like whipcords on his brow, and a hot sweat runs from every pore of his body—and still flees onward. Now, he looks behind, and sees the avenger of blood speeding after him; he does not stop; he spurns the ground, and on he flees till he reaches the city of refuge, where he is safe. Ah! if we had eyes to see, and if we knew who it is that is pursuing us every day of our lives, how we should run! for lo! O man, hell is behind thee, sin pursues thee, evil seeks to overtake thee; the City of Refuge has its gates wide open; I beseech thee, rest not till thou canst say with confidence, "I have entered into this rest, and now I am secure; I know that my Redeemer liveth." And rest not even then, for this is not the place for rest; rest not until thy six days' work is done; and thy heavenly Sabbath is begun. Let this life be thy six days of ever-toiling faith. Obey thy Master's commandment; "labour therefore to enter into this rest," seeing that there are many who shall not enter in, because through their want of faith they shall not be able. If that urge not a man to speed forward, what can?

But let me picture yet one more thing; and may that help you onward! Christian, run onward, for remember *who it is that stands at the winning post*. You are to run onward, always looking unto Jesus; then Jesus must be at the end. We are always to be looking forward, and never backward; therefore Jesus must be there. Are you loitering? See him with his open wounds. Are you about to leave the course? See him with his bleeding hands; will not that constrain you to devote yourself to him? Will not that impel you to speed your course, and never loiter until you have obtained the crown? Your dying Master cries to you to-day, and he says, "By my agony and bloody sweat; by my cross and passion, onward! By my life, which I gave for you; by the death which I endured for your sake, onward!" And see! He holds out his hand, laden with a crown sparkling with many a star, and he says, "By this crown, onward!" I beseech you, onward, my beloved; press forward, for "I know that there is laid up for me a crown of life which fadeth not away, and not for me only, but for all them that love his appearing."

I have thus addressed myself to all sorts of characters. Will you this afternoon take that home to yourself which is the most applicable to your case. Those of you who make no profession of religion, are living without God and without Christ, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel,—let me affectionately remind you that the day is coming when you will want religion. It is very well now to be sailing over the smooth waters of life, but the rough billows of Jordan will make you want a Saviour. It is hard work to die without a hope; to take that last leap in the dark is a frightful thing indeed. I have seen the old man die when he has declared he would not die. He has stood upon the brink of death, and he has said, "All dark, dark, dark! O God, I cannot die." And his agony has been fearful when the strong hand of the destroyer has seemed to push him over the precipice. He "lingered shivering on the brink, and feared to launch away." And frightful was the moment when the foot slipped and the solid earth was left, and the soul was sinking into the depths of eternal wrath. You will want a Saviour then, when your pulse is faint and few; you will need an angel then to stand at your bedside; and when the spirit is departing, you will need a sacred convoy to pilot you through the dark clouds of death and guide you through the iron gate, and lead you to the blessed mansion in the land of the hereafter. Oh, "seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." O Lord, turn us and we shall be turned. Draw us and we will run after thee; and thine shall be the glory; for the crown of our race shall be cast at thy feet, and thou shalt have the glory forever and ever.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

A FREE SALVATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON FRIDAY EVENING, JUNE 11, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

ON THE GRAND STAND, EPSOM RACE-COURSE.

"Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."—Isaiah lv. 1.

You see, I have something to sell this evening, I have to invite you to come and buy that which, in the gospel will this night be proclaimed. Now, it is usual when persons have anything to sell, to *exhibit the article*, to describe its character, and speak of its excellencies; for until persons are made aware of the nature of that which you exhibit, it is not likely that they will be prepared to buy it. That shall be my first business this evening. Then the man who has aught to sell, in the next place, endeavours to bring those who hear him *up to the price* at which he desires to sell. My business to-night is to bring you *down to the price*—"Come buy wine and milk without money and without price." I shall then conclude by addressing a *few sentences of earnest persuasion* to those who despise that glorious salvation which it is our privilege to preach, and turn away from those generous stipulations—"without money and without price."

I. In the first place, then, I have to preach, to-night, WINE AND MILK—"Come buy wine and milk." There we have a description of the gospel—wine that maketh glad the heart of man; milk, the one thing and the only thing in the world which contains all the essentials of life. The strongest man might live on milk, for in it, there is everything which is needed for the human frame—for bone, for sinew, for nerve, for muscle, for flesh—all is there. There you have a double description. The gospel is like wine which makes us glad. Let a man truly know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he will be a happy man, and the deeper he drinks into the spirit of Christ, the more happy will he become. That religion which teaches misery to be a duty, is false upon the very face of it, for God, when he made the world, studied the happiness of his creatures. You cannot help thinking, as you see everything around you, that God has sedulously, with the most strict attention, sought ways of pleasing man. He has not just given us our absolute necessities, he has given us more; not simply the useful, but even the ornamental. The flowers in the hedgerow, the stars in the sky, the beauties of nature, the hill and the valley—all these things were intended not merely because we needed them, but because God would show us how he loved us, and how anxious he was that we should be happy. Now, it is not likely that the God who made a happy world would send a miserable salvation. He who is a happy Creator will be a happy Redeemer; and those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, can bear witness that the ways of religion "are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." And if this life were all, if death were the burial of all our life, and if the shroud were the winding-sheet of eternity, still to be a Christian would be a bright and happy thing, for it lights up this valley of tears, and fills the wells in the valley of Baca to the brim with streams of love and joy. The gospel, then, is like wine. It is like milk, too, for there is everything in the gospel that you want. Do you want something to bear you up in trouble? It is in the gospel—"a very present help in time of trouble." Do you need something to nerve you for duty? There is grace all-sufficient for everything that God calls you to undergo or to accomplish. Do you need something to light up the eye of your hope? Oh! there are joy-flashes in the gospel that may make your eye flash back again the immortal fires of bliss. Do you want something to make you stand steadfast in the midst of temptation? In the gospel there is that that can make you immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. There is no passion, no affection, no thought, no wish, no power which the gospel has not filled to the very brim. The gospel was evidently meant for manhood; it is adapted to it in its every part. There is knowledge for the head; there is love for the heart; there is guidance for the foot. There is milk and wine, in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And I think there is another meaning in the two words "milk and wine." Wine, you know, is a rich thing, something that requires much time to manufacture.

There has to be vintage and fermentation and preservation before wine can come to its full flavour. Now, the gospel is like that; it is an extraordinary thing for feast days; it gives a man power to use a vintage of thought, a fermentation of action, and a preservation of experience, till a man's piety comes forth like the sparkling wine that makes the heart leap with gladness. There is that, I say, in religion, that makes it an extraordinary thing, a thing for rare occasions, to be brought out when princes sit at the table. But milk is an ordinary thing; you get it every day, anywhere. If you just run out into the farm yard there it is; there is no preparation required; it is ready to the hand; it is an ordinary thing. So is it with the gospel: it is a thing for every day. I love the gospel on Sunday, but, blessed be God, it is a Monday gospel too. The gospel is a thing for the chapel, and it is a thing for the church; there it is like wine. But it is a thing for the farm yard, it is a thing which you may observe behind the plough, and hum behind the counter. The religion of Christ is a thing that will go with you into your shop, on to the Exchange, into the market, everywhere. It is like milk—an everyday dish—a thing which we may always have, and upon which we may always feast. Oh! thank heaven, there is wine for that high day when we shall see the Saviour face to face; there is wine for that dread day when we shall ford the stream of Jordan—wine that shall remove our fears and bid us sing in the midst of the dark billows of Death: but thanks be unto him, there is milk too—milk for everyday occurrences, for every-day actions, milk for us to drink as long as we live, and milk to cherish us till the last great day shall come.

Now, I think I have explained the figure in my text; but still some will say, "What is the gospel?" Well, the gospel, as I take it, can be looked at in various ways, but I will put it to night as this—the gospel is the preaching of a full, free, present, everlasting pardon to sinners through Jesus Christ's atoning blood. If I understand the gospel at all, it has in it a great deal more than this; but still this is the substance of it. I have to preach to night the great fact that while all have sinned, Christ hath died, and to all penitents who now confess their sins and put their trust in Christ, there is a full, free pardon—free in this respect, that you have nothing to do in order to get it. The meanest sin-stricken sinner has simply to pour out his plaintive griefs before God; that is all he asks. There is no fitness needed;—

"All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him:

This he gives you;
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

There is no need to pass through years of penance, of hard labour, and of trial; the gospel is as free as the air you breathe. You do not pay for breathing; you do not pay for seeing the sunlight, nor for the water that flows in the river as you stoop to drink it in your thirst. So the gospel is free; nothing is to be done in order to get it. No merits need be brought in order to obtain it. There is free pardon for the chief of sinners through Jesus Christ's blood. But I said it was a full pardon, and so it is. When Christ does anything he never does it by halves. He is willing this night to blot out every sin and cleanse every iniquity of every soul present who is now prepared by God's grace to seek his mercy. If now, sinner, God hath put it in thine heart to seek him, the pardon which he is prepared to give thee, is a full one; not a pardon for a part of your sins, but for all at once:—

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast,

And, oh! my soul with wonder view,
For sins to come here's pardon too."

Here is pardon for your drunkenness, pardon for your oaths, pardon for your lust, pardon for your rebellion against heaven; for the sins of your youth and the sins of your old age; for the sins of the sanctuary and the sins of the brothel, or the tavern. Here is pardon for all sin, for "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." But again, the pardon we have to preach is a *present* pardon. If you feel your need of a Saviour, if now you are enabled to believe in Christ, you shall be pardoned now. Those who have ordinary hopes say they hope to be pardoned when they come to die. But, beloved, that is not the religion we preach. If you will now make confession of sin, now seek the Lord, you shall be pardoned now. It is possible for a man to have come in here with all his sins hanging about his neck like a millstone, enough to sink him lower than the lowest hell, and yet to go out of this door with every sin blotted out. If now he is enabled to believe on him, he may this night receive perfect pardon from the hand of God. The pardon of a sinner is not a thing done when he is dying, it is done when he is living—done now. And there be some here I trust, and they not a few, who can rejoice to night in the fact that they are pardoned. Oh! is it not a magnificent thing for a man to be able to tread God's

A FREE SALVATION.

earth with this for a song in his mouth, "I am forgiven, I am forgiven; I am pardoned?" I think it is one of the sweetest songs in all the world—scarcely less sweet than that of the cherubim before the throne—

"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of his soul redeeming blood!

With divine assurance knowing,
He has made my peace with God."

Oh! what would you give for such a salvation as this, ye mourning souls? It is preached to you without money and without price, and I am bidden to cry "Ho! ho! Every one that thirsteth; if you feel your need of Christ, if you are now ready to confess your sins, come and take it freely without money and without price." But the best remains for the last. The pardon which is proclaimed to-night, is not only a free, and full, and present, but it is a pardon that *will last for ever*. If the Queen pardons any one—grants a free pardon—it is impossible that man should be punished for the same offence. Very often, however, the Queen grants a reprieve that is not a full pardon. There are cases in which persons are so far pardoned, that they are not executed for the crime, but confined during Her Majesty's pleasure. Now, our Lord never does that; he makes a clean sweep of it: there is not one sin that he allows to remain. When he does wash a soul, he washes it whiter than the driven snow. God doth things perfectly. But the best of it is, that what he does once is done for ever. This is the very glory of the gospel. If you get pardon to-night, you are saved now, but you never shall be condemned. If a man believeth in Christ with all his heart, his salvation is secure beyond hazard; and I always look upon this as the very jewel of the crown of salvation, that it is irreversible. If I commit my soul into the hands of God,

"His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly father gave
His hands securely keep.

Not death or hell shall e'er divide
His fav'rites from his breast;
In the dear bosom of their God
They must for ever rest."

God does not make you his child to-day, and turn you out to-morrow; he does not forgive you to-day, and then punish you the next day. As true as God is God, if thou gettest thy pardon to-night Christian, the earth may melt away just as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is lost for ever; the great universe may pass away and be like the hoar-frost before the morning sun; but thou never canst be condemned. As long as God is God, he who has got his pardon signed and sealed, is beyond the reach of harm. I would not preach any other—I dare not. It would not be worth your receiving, it would not be worth my taking the trouble to preach; but this is worth any man's having indeed, for it is a sure investment. He who puts himself into the hands of Christ has a sure keeper, come what may—and there may come strong temptations and strong affections, and there may come strong pains and hard duties, but he that hath helped us bears us through, and makes us more than conquerors too. Oh! to be pardoned once, with the certain assurance that we shall be pardoned for ever, beyond the hazard of being cast away!

And now again, I will just preach this *salvation*, for this is the wine and milk which is proclaimed without money and without price. Beloved, all this is to be gained by faith in Christ—whosoever believeth in him who died upon the tree, and groaned away his life for us—shall never come into condemnation: he is passed from death unto life, and the love of God abideth in him.

II. And now, having thus exhibited the article, my next business is to BRING THE BIDDERS UP TO THE AUCTION BOX AND SELL IT. My difficulty is to bring you down to my price, as old Rowland said. He was preaching in a fair, and he heard a man selling his goods. "Ah!" said he, "as for those people over there, their difficulty is to bring people up to their price; whereas, my difficulty is to bring you down to my price."

Now, here is a gospel fully preached, without money and without price. Here comes some one up to the sacred desk, transformed for the moment into an auction box, and he cries, "I want to buy." What will you give for it? He holds out his hands, and he has such a handful; he has to lift up his very lap with more, for he can hardly hold all his good works. He has Ave-Marias and Paternosters without number, and all kinds of crossings with holy water, and bendings of the knee, and prostrations before the altar, and reverence of the host, and attending at the mass, and so on. In French, they call the mass the *messe*, and a mess it is and no mistake; but there are a great many people who trust in it; and when they come before God, they bring all these things as the ground of their reliance.

And so, Sir Romanist, you are coming to get salvation are you? and you have brought all this with you. Friend, I am sorry for thee, but thou must go away from the box with all thy performances, for it is "without money and without price," and until thou art prepared to come empty handed thou canst never have it.

If thou hast anything of thine own thou canst not receive it. "But," says he, "I am no heretic. Am I not true to the Pope? Do I not make confession and get absolution, and pay my shilling?" Do you my friend? Then because you pay your shilling for it, it is good for nothing, for that which is good for something you can have "without money and without price." The light we pay for is a sickly thing, but that which we get from heaven for nothing, is the rich healthy light which makes the heart glad. So the pardon that comes from Christ is "without money and without price."

Then another comes up and says "I am glad you have served the Romanist like that. I hate the Church of Rome; I am a true Protestant, and desire to be saved." What have you brought, sir? "Oh I have brought no Ave-Marias, no Paternosters; I abhor the names; I do not like those Latin names, not I. But I say the collect every Sunday; I am very attentive to my prayers. I go to church almost as soon as the doors are open," or (if he is a Dissenter) "I go to chapel three times on the Sabbath, and I attend the prayer-meetings; and beside that, I pay everybody twenty shillings in the pound; I had rather pay twenty-one shillings than nineteen. I would not like to hurt anybody; I do not tread upon a worm if I can help it; I am always liberal, and assist the poor when I can. I may make a little slip just now and then. I may turn aside a little; still, if I am not saved I do not know who will be. I am as good as my neighbours, and I think, sir, I certainly ought to be saved, for I have very few sins, and what few there are do not hurt other people; they hurt me more than any one else. Besides, they are mere trifles; only one or two days in the year I break loose, and a man must have a little amusement after all. I assure you I am one of the best, most honest, and sober, and religious people going." Well, my friend, I am sorry to hear you quarrelling with the Romanist, for I do not like to see twin brothers disagree. You are both of the same kith and kin, believe me, for the essence of Popery is salvation by works and ceremonies. You do not practise his works and ceremonies, but then you hope to be saved by your own, and you are just as bad as he. I will send you away; there is no salvation for you, for it is "without money and without price;" and as long as you bring these fine good works of yours you cannot have it. Mark, I do not find any fault with them, they are good enough in their place, but they won't do here to-night, and they won't do at the judgment bar of God. Practice those things as much as you like; they are good in their place; but still, in the matter of salvation you must leave them out, and come for it as poor guilty sinners, and take it "without money and without price." Says one, "Do you find fault with good works?" Not at all. Suppose I see a man building a house, and he were fool enough to lay the foundation with chimney-pots. If I should say, "My dear man, I do not like these chimney-pots to be put into the foundation," you would not say I found fault with the chimney-pots, but that I found fault with the man for putting them in the wrong place. Let him put good solid masonry at the bottom, and then when the house is built he may put on as many chimney-pots as he likes. So with good works and ceremonies; they will not do for a foundation. The foundation must be built of more solid stuff. Our hope must be built on nothing less than Jesu's blood and righteousness, and when we have built a foundation with that, we may have as many good works as we like—the more the better. But for a foundation, good works are fickle and feeble things, and he that useth them will see his house totter to the ground.

But see another man. He is a long way off, and he says, "Sir, I am afraid to come; I could not come and make a bid for the salvation. Sir, I've got no larnin', I'm no scholar, I can't read a book, I wish I could. My children go to Sunday-school; I wish there was such a thing in my time, I can't read, and its no use my hoping to go to heaven. I goes to church sometimes, but oh dear! it's no good; the man uses such long words I can't understand 'em, and I goes to chapel sometimes, but I can't make it out. I knows a little of the hymns my child says, about

'Gentle Jesus meek and mild,'—and

'Oh! that will be joyful, when we meet to part no more.'

I wish they would preach like that, and then, maybe, I could make it out. But I'm no scholar, sir, and I don't think I can be saved." O my dear friend, you need not stand over there at the back. Come along with you. It wants no scholarship to go to heaven. The more you know the better it will be for you on earth, no doubt, but it will be of no particular use to you in heaven. If you can "read your title clear to mansions in the skies," if you know enough to know yourself a lost sinner, and Christ a great Saviour, that is all you want to know to get to heaven. There is many a man in heaven that never read a letter on earth—many a man that could not, if his life depended on it, have signed his name, but was obliged to write a cross as "Tom Stiles's mark"—and there he is among the brightest. Peter

himself has not a brighter place than many poor ignorant souls who looked to Jesus Christ, and were enlightened. I will tell you something to comfort you. Don't you know that Christ said, the poor had the gospel preached to them; and besides that, he said, "Except a man be converted, and become as a little child, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." What does that mean, but that we must believe the gospel like little children? A little child has not much learning; he just believes what he is told; and that is what you are to do. You are to believe what God tells you. He says, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. That is no hard thing, is it? You can believe that; and if you can, if you are destitute of all human knowledge, you shall without doubt, know hereafter what you know not now.

Now, I see a man come up to the stall, and he says, "Well, I will have salvation, sir; I have made in my will provisions for the building of a church or two, and a few almshouses; I always devote a part of my substance to the cause of God; I always relieve the poor, and such-like; I have a pretty good share of money, and I take care not to hoard it up; I am generous and liberal; I try to set up poor trades-people, and so forth. Won't that carry me to heaven?" Well, I like you very much, and I wish there were more of your sort. There is nothing like generosity and liberality certainly, where it is exhibited towards the sick and the poor, the destitute and the ignorant, and in the cause of God; but if you bring these things as your hope of heaven, my dear friend, I must undeceive you. You cannot buy heaven with gold. Why, they pave the streets up there with it. Are we not told in the book of Revelation, that the streets of the city were all of pure gold like unto transparent glass. Why, if you had twenty thousand pounds you could not buy a flag-stone with it. Baron Rothschild could not buy a foot of heaven if he spent all his money for it. It is too precious a place to be bought with gold and silver. If all the wealth of the Indies could be shot out in order to buy one glimpse of heaven, it would be useless. There is no man that could get so much as a distant peep within its pearly gates for all the gold that heart could conceive or covetousness desire. It is given away for nothing. Christ will never sell it—never—because there is nothing that can be brought at all equal to its value. What Christ bought with *blood* you cannot buy with *gold*. He redeemed us not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with his precious blood; and there is no other price that can ever be allowed. Ah! my rich friend, you are just on a level with your poorest labourer. You may wear broadcloth, and he fustian, yet he has as good an opportunity of being saved as you. Ah! my lady, satin has no preference in heaven above calico or cotton.

"None are excluded hence but those who do themselves exclude."

Wealth makes distinction on earth, but no distinction at the cross of Christ. You must all come alike to the footstool of Jesus, or else not come at all. I knew a minister who told me he was once sent for to the dying bed of a woman who was very well to do in the world, and she said, "Mr. Baxter, do you think when I get to heaven Betsy my servant will be there?" "Well," he said, "I don't know much about you, but Betsy will be there; for if I know any one who is a pious girl, it is she." "Well," said the lady, "don't you think there will be a little distinction? for I never could find it in my heart to sit down with a girl of that sort; she has no taste, no education, and I could not endure it. I think there ought to be a little difference." "Ah! you need not trouble yourself, madam," said he, "there will be a great distinction between you and Betsy, if you die in the temper in which you now are; but the distinction will be on the wrong side; for you will see her in Abraham's bosom, but you yourself will be cast out. As long as you have such pride in your heart, you can never enter into the kingdom of heaven." He spoke to her very plainly, and she was mightily offended. But I believe she preferred to be found out of heaven to submitting to sit with her servant Betsy. Let us respect rank and title here, if you please: but when we preach the gospel we know no such thing. If I preached to a congregation of kings, I would preach just the same gospel that I would preach to a congregation of clod-hoppers. The king on his throne, and the queen in her palace, have no gospel different from you and me. However humble and obscure we may be, there stands the gate of heaven wide open; there is the king's royal highway for us. The highway is as much for the poor man as for the rich man; so is the kingdom of heaven—"without money and without price."

Now I hear my friend the Calvinist over there say, "Well, I like that, but still I think I can come, and though I can say with you,—

'Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.'

Yet I can say this—I have had a deep experience, sir, I have been led to see the plague of my own heart, and I have felt a great deal. When I come to Christ, I

rely a great deal upon my feelings. I do not think you are right in calling all kinds of sinners to come to Christ, but you are right in calling me, for I am one of the right sort. I am one of the publican sort; I am pharisaical enough to think that; I think that I most certainly have a special commission to come, for I have such an experience that if I were to write my biography, you would say, 'This is a good experience; this man has a right to come to Christ.' Well, friend, I am sorry to upset you, but I shall be compelled to do so. If you bring your experience to Christ when you come to him, you are as bad as the Romanist who brings his masses and Ave-Marias. I like your experience very well, if it be the work of God's grace in your heart, but if you bring it when you come to Christ, you put that before Christ, and it is an Anti-Christ. Away with it! away with it! When we have been preaching to poor sinners and tried to describe their state by nature and their feelings, I have been afraid after all, that we were fostering a spirit of self righteousness, and teaching our hearers to think that they must get certain feelings, before they can come to Christ. Let me just, if I can, preach the gospel in the broadest way possible, and that is the most truthful way. Christ wants your feelings no more than he does your money, and that is, not at all. If you want good experience you must come to Christ:—

"All the fitness he requireth, is to feel your need of him."

Yes, but stop—

"This he gives you, 'tis his Spirit's rising beam."

You are to come to Christ to get everything. You are not to say, "Well, I will believe first, and then come." No; go to Christ for faith. You must look to the cross even to get a sense of sin. We do not feel our sins so much before we see the cross, but we feel them most afterwards. We look to Christ first; then repentance flows from both our streaming eyes. Remember, if you go anywhere else to find a Saviour, you are on the wrong track. If you try to bring anything to Christ, to use a homely proverb, it is like bringing coals to Newcastle. He has plenty—he does not want any of yours, and what is more, as soon as he sees anything in your hands he will turn you straight away. He will have nothing to do with you until you can say—

"Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling."

I have heard of a negro who was convinced of sin, and at the same time his master was under conviction. The negro found peace with God, but the master was a long time seeking without any hope; and at last he said, "I cannot make out how it is that you found comfort so soon, and I cannot get it at all." So the negro, after asking his master to excuse his speaking plainly, said, "Massa, I tink it is just dis. When Jesus say, 'Come along,' he say, 'I give you a righteousness dat cover you from head to foot.' I, poor negro, looks down at myself, covered all over wid filthy rags, and I say, 'Lord, clothe me, I am naked,'—and off go my rags. Now, massa, you not so bad as dat. When he say, 'Come along,' to you, you look at your coat, and you say, 'Well, it wants a little mending, but I tink it will wear a little longer. Dere is a great hole here, but a little darning and stitching will do it up again.' So, massa, you keep your old coat; you keep on darning and stitching, and you never get comfort. But if you would take it off, you would get comfort at once." That is just it, we will be trying to get something before we come to Christ.

Now I dare say in this congregation I have a hundred different phases of this singular fatuity of man—the desire to bring something to Christ. "Oh," says one, "I would come to Christ, but I have been too great a sinner." Self again, sir, your being a great sinner has nothing to do with that. Christ is a great Saviour, and however great your sin, his mercy is greater than that. He invites you simply as a sinner. Be you big or little, he bids you come to him and take his salvation "without money and without price." Another says, "Ah! but I do not feel it enough." Self again. He does not ask you about your feelings; he simply says, "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth." "But, sir, I cannot pray." Self again. You are not to be saved by your prayers; you are to be saved by Christ, and your business is simply to look to Christ; he will help you to pray afterwards. You must begin at the right end by clinging only to his cross and trusting there. "But," says another, "if I felt as So-and-so did." Self again. What business have you to talk so? Christ is where you are to look, not to self. "Yes," you say, "I think he would receive anybody but me." Please, who gave you any leave to think at all in the matter? Does he not say, "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out?" Why, you are thinking your soul into eternal ruin. Give up thinking, and believe. Are your thoughts as God's thoughts? Remember, his thoughts are as much higher than yours as heaven is higher than earth. "But," says one, "I have sought him and I have

not found him." Dear friend, can you truly say that you have come to Christ with nothing in your hand, and have looked alone to him, and yet he has cast you away? Do you dare to say that? No; if God's Word be true, and you are true, you cannot say that. Ah! I remember how that struck my heart when I heard my mother say it once. I had been some years seeking Christ, and I never could believe he would save me. She said she had heard many people swear and blaspheme God, but one thing she had never heard—she had never heard a man say he had sought Christ, and Christ had rejected him. "And," said she, "I do not believe that God would permit any man to live to say that." Well, I thought I could say it; I thought I had sought him, and he had cast me away, and I determined I would say it, even if it destroyed my soul: I would speak what I thought was the truth. But, I said to myself, "I will try once more;" and I went to the Master, with nothing of my own, casting myself simply on his mercy; and I believed that he died for me:—and I have never said that, and blessed be his holy name, I know I never shall. Nor will you. Oh, do try him.

"Make but a trial of his love;
Experience will decide

How blest are they, and only they,
Who in his love confide."

If you will come down to this price, and take Christ for nothing, just as he is, "without money and without price," you shall not find him a hard Master.

III. Now, I have to use a FEW ARGUMENTS with you, and may God apply them to your hearts! I would first speak to some of *you who never think about these things at all*. You have come here to hear the Word to-day, because it is preached in a strange place; otherwise you might not have been in the house of God at all. Very seldom you vex yourselves with religious questions; you do not ask yourselves many questions about it, because you feel it would be an awkward thing for you if you were to think much of religion; you feel there would be a necessity for a change of life in you, for thoughts about religion and your present habits would not suit well together. My dear friends, bear with me a moment if I press you very much home. Did you ever hear of the ostrich? When the hunter pursues it, the poor silly bird flies away as fast as it can, and when it sees that there is no way of escape, what do you suppose it does? It buries its head in the sand, and then thinks it is safe, because it shuts its eyes and cannot see. Is not that just what you are doing? Conscience won't let you rest, and what you are trying to do is to bury it. You bury your head in the sand; you do not like to think. Ah! if we could bring men to think, what a wonderful thing we should have done! That is one of the things, sinner, that, without Christ, you dare not do. Do you think? We have heard of men afraid to be alone half an hour because of thoughts too terrible for them. I challenge any of you without God, to spend one hour on that heath, or in this balcony, or in your own house at home, and just chew these thoughts, masticate them—"I am an enemy to God; my sins are not forgiven; if I die to-night, I am damned to all eternity; I have never sought Christ, and never found him to be mine." I defy you to keep at that an hour. You dare not; you would be afraid of your shadow. The only way sinners can be happy is by thoughtlessness. They say, "Cover it up; bury my dead out of my sight." They put such thoughts away. Now is this wise? Is there anything in religion? If not, it will be consistent in you to deny it; but if this Bible is true, if you have a soul that is to live for ever, is it rational, is it sensible, is it prudent, to be neglecting your eternal soul? If you suffered your bodies to starve, you would not want much argument, would you, to induce you to eat? But here is your soul perishing, and yet no mortal tongue can persuade you to attend to that. Ah! is it not strange that men are going to live for ever in eternity, and yet they have never provided for it. I have heard of a certain king who had a fool in his court, who made a great many merry jests, and the king gave him a stick, and said, "Keep that till you find a bigger fool than yourself." At last the king came to die, and when he lay a-dying, the jester came to him and said, "Master, what is the matter?" "I am going to die," said the king. "Going to die—where's that?" "I am going to die, man, don't laugh at me now. How long are you going to be there?" "Well, where I am going I shall live for ever." "Have you got a house there?" "No." "Have you made any preparation for the journey?" "No." "Have you got any provision whatever, as you are going to live there such a long time?" "No." "There, take the stick; fool as I am, I have made preparation. I am not such a fool as to have to live in a place where I have not got a house." Christ has prepared for his people a mansion in heaven. There was much wisdom in the jester's language. Let me speak to you, even though it be in his language, but very seriously. If men are to live for ever in heaven, is it not a strange, wild, frantic freak of intolerant madness, that they never think of the world to come. To-day they think, but for ever—they put that away. Time, and its poor baubles and its toys do fill the heart; but eternity—that

hill without a summit, that sea without a shore, that river without an end, over which they are to sail for ever—they never think of that. Will you pause a moment and recollect that you have to sail for ever, and you must sail o'er the burning waves of hell, or else o'er sparkling streams of glory. Which shall it be with you? You will have to consider this soon. Before many days, and months, and years are gone, God will say to you, "Prepare to meet thy God," and it may be that the summons shall come to you when you are in the death struggle, when the stream of Jordan is chilling your blood, and your heart is sunken within you by reason of fear. And what will you do then? What wilt thou do in the swellings of sin in the day when thou art spoiled? What shalt thou do when God shall bring thee into judgment?

And I have now the pleasing task of closing by addressing men of another character. Ah! friend; you are not careless. You have many thoughts, and they pain you; but, although you would be glad to get rid of them, you would be afraid to do so. You can say, "Oh! I do feel it were well for me if I could rejoice in Christ—I do feel I should be happy if I could be converted." Friend, I am glad to hear thee say so. Where God has put the work of an impressed heart, I do not think he will leave it till he has finished. Now, I want to speak to you very seriously to-night, but for a minute. You do feel your need of a Saviour. Remember, Christ died for you. Believe that—will you? There he hangs upon his cross, dying; look into his face, it is full of love, it is melting with forgiveness; his lips are moving, and he says, "Father forgive them." Will you look to him? Can you hear him say it, and yet turn away? All he asks you is simply to look, and that look will save you. You do feel your need of a Saviour; you know you are a sinner. Why tarry? Do not say you are unworthy. Remember, he died for the unworthy. Do not say he will not save you. Remember, he died for the devil's castaways; the very draf and scum of the world Christ has redeemed. Look at him. Can you look at him and not believe him? Can you see the blood streaming from his shoulders, and trickling from his hands and side, and not believe him? Oh! by him that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, I entreat you to believe on the Lord Jesus; for thus it is written, "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus, and is baptized, shall be saved."

Once when Rowland Hill was preaching, Lady Ann Erskine happened to be driving by: she was in the outer ring of the circle, and she asked the coachman, what all the people were there for. He replied, "They are going to hear Rowland Hill." Well, she had heard a great deal about this strange man, accounted to be the very wildest of preachers, and so she drew near. No sooner did Rowland Hill see her, than he said, "Come, I am going to have an auction, I am going to sell Lady Ann Erskine." (She of course stopped, and she wondered how she was going to be disposed of.) "Who will buy her?" Up comes the world. "What will you give for her?" "I will give her all the pomps and vanities of this present life; she shall be a happy woman here she shall be very rich, she shall have many admirers, she shall go through this world with many joys." You shall not have her; her soul is an everlasting thing; it is a poor price you are offering; you are only giving a *little*, and what shall it profit her if she gain the whole world and lose her own soul? Here comes another purchaser—here is the devil. "What will you give for her." "Well," says he, "I will let her enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; she shall indulge in everything her heart shall set itself unto; she shall have everything to delight the eye and the ear; she shall indulge in every sin and vice that can possibly give a transient pleasure." Ah! Satan, what will you do for her for ever? You shall not have her, for I know what you are; you would give a paltry price for her, and then destroy her soul to all eternity. But, here comes another—I know him—it is the Lord Jesus. "What will you give for her?" Says he, "It is not what I will give, it is what I have given; I have given my life, my blood for her; I have bought her with a price, and I will give her heaven for ever and ever; I will give her grace in her heart now and glory throughout eternity."

"O Lord, Jesus Christ," said Rowland Hill, "thou shalt have her. Lady Ann Erskine, do you demur to the bargain?" She was fairly caught; there was no answer that could be given. "It is done," he said, "it is done; you are the Saviour's; I have betrothed you unto him; never break that contract." And she never did. From that time forth, from being a gay and volatile woman she became one of the most serious persons, one of the greatest supporters of the truth of the gospel in those times, and died in a glorious and certain hope of entering the kingdom of heaven. I would be well pleased if I might make a match of some of you this night; if you would now say, "Lord, I will have thee," Christ is ready. If he has made you ready he is never behind hand himself. Whosoever is willing to have Christ, Christ is willing to have him. What sayest thou? wilt thou go with this man? If thou sayest "Ay," God bless thee! Christ saith "Ay" too, and thou art saved, saved now, saved for ever!

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE WICKED MAN'S LIFE, FUNERAL, AND EPITAPH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 13, 1853, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity."—Ecclesiastes viii. 10.

It is quite certain that there are immense benefits attending our present mode of burial in extra mural cemeteries. It was high time that the dead should be removed from the midst of the living—that we should not worship in the midst of corpses, and sit in the Lord's house on the Sabbath, breathing the noxious effluvia of decaying bodies. But when we have said this, we must remember that there are some advantages which we have lost by the removal of the dead, and more especially by the wholesale mode of burial which now seems very likely to become general. We are not so often met by the array of dead. In the midst of our crowded cities we sometimes see the sable hearse bearing the relics of men to their last homes, but the funeral ceremonies are now mostly confined to those sweet sleeping places beyond our walks, where rest the bodies of those who are very dear to us. Now, I believe the sight of a funeral is a very healthful thing for the soul. Whatever harm may come to the body by walking through the vault and the catacomb, the soul can there find much food for contemplation, and much excitement for thought. In the great villages, where some of us were wont to dwell, we remember how, when the funeral came now and then, the tolling of the bell preached to all the villagers a better sermon than they had heard in the church for many a day; and we recollect, how as children, we used to cluster around the grave, and look at that which was not so frequent an occurrence in the midst of a rare and spare population; and we remember the solemn thoughts which used to arise even in our young hearts when we heard the words uttered, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." The solemn falling of the few grains of ashes upon the coffin-lid was the sowing of good seed in our hearts. And afterwards, when we have in our childish play climbed over those nettle-bound graves, and seated ourselves upon those moss-grown tombstones, we have had many a lesson preached to us by the dull, cold tongue of death, more eloquent than aught we have heard from the lip of living man, and more likely to abide with us in after years; but now we see little of death. We have fulfilled Abraham's wish beyond what he desired—we "bury the dead out of our sight;" it is rarely that we see them, and a stranger passing through our streets might say, "Do these live always? for I see no funerals amongst the millions of this city; I see no signs of death."

We shall this morning want you, first of all, to *walk with a living man*; it is said of him that he did "come and go from the place of the holy;" next, I shall want you to *attend his funeral*; and then, in conclusion, I shall ask you to *assist in writing his epitaph*—"and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this also is vanity."

I. In the first place, **HERE IS SOME GOOD COMPANY FOR YOU**; some with whom you may walk to the house of God, for it is said of them, that they did come and go from the place of the holy. By this, I think we may understand the place where the righteous meet to worship God. God's house may be called "the place of the holy." Still, if we confine ourselves strictly to the Hebrew, and to the con-

nection, it appears that by the "place of the holy" is intended the judgment-seat the place where the magistrate dispenses justice; and alas! there be some wicked who come and go even to the place of judgment, to judge their fellow sinners. And we may with equal propriety consider it in a third sense to represent the pulpit, which should be "the place of the holy; but we have seen the wicked come and go even from the pulpit, though God had never commanded them to declare his statutes.

In the first place we will take this as representing *the house of God*. What a sight it is to see the great crowds coming up to the sanctuary of the Lord. I am sure, as we saw the multitudes coming up to the house of God, there must have been a peculiar thrill of joy pass through our hearts. It reminds us of the ancient gathering in Zion's temple when thither the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, to worship at the sanctuary of God. Oh! it is a noble sight when with joy and gladness we see the young and the old, the grey-headed and the children, all of them pressing forward in one eager throng to worship the Lord of Hosts, and listen to the voice of his sacred oracle. But your pleasure must have a great deal of alloy if you stop for a moment and dissect the congregation. Pull the goodly mass in sunder: in a heap it sparkles like gold; pull aside the threads, and alas! you will see that there are some not made of the precious metal, for "we have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy." Gathered in this throng this morning we have here men who almost profane the spot in which they are found. Last night's revel has left its impress upon their countenances. We have others who will, ere this day is closed, be cursing God in the house of Satan. There be many to be found here who have during this week been spending their time in lying, cheating, and swindling in the midst of their business. I doubt not there are some here who have taken every advantage that was possible of their fellow men, and if they have not come within the clutches of the law it certainly has not been their fault. We have too, I doubt not, in such a multitude—yea, I may speak with confidence—we have men here who have, during the past week, and at other times, defiled themselves with sins that we will not mention, for it were a shame for us to speak of the things which are done of them in secret. Little do we know when we look here from this pulpit—it looks like one great field of flowers, fair to look upon—how many a root of deadly henbane and noxious nightshade groweth here; and though you all look fair and goodly, yet "I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy."

Shall we just take the wicked man's arm and walk with him to the house of God? When he begins to go, if he be one who has neglected going in his childhood, which perhaps is not extremely likely, when he begins to go even in his childhood, or whenever you choose to mention, you will notice that he is not often affected by the sound of the ministry. He goes up to the chapel with flippancy and mirth. He goeth to it as he would to a theatre or any other place of amusement, as a means of passing away his Sabbath and killing time. Merrily he trippeth in there; but I have seen the wicked man when he went away look far differently from what he did when he entered. His plumes had been trailed in the dust. As he walks home there is no more flippancy and lightness, for he says, "Surely the Lord God has been in that place and I have been compelled to tremble. I went to scoff, but I am obliged, in coming away, to confess that there is a power in religion, and the services of God's house are not all dulness after all." Perhaps you have hoped good of this man. But, alas! he forgot it all, and cast away all his impressions. And he came again the next Sunday, and that time he felt again. Again the arrow of the Lord seemed to stick fast in his heart. But, alas! it was like the rushing of water. There was a mark for a moment, but his heart was soon healed, he felt not the blow; and as for persuading him to salvation, he was like the deaf adder, "charm we never so wisely," he would not regard us so as to turn from his ways. And I have seen him come and go till years have rolled over his head, and he has still filled his seat, and the minister is still preaching, but in his case preaching in vain. Still are the tears of mercy flowing for him; still are the thunders of justice launched against him; but he abideth just as he was. In him there is no change except this, that now he groweth hard and callous. You do not now hear him say that he trembles under the Word—not he. He is like a horse that hath been in the battle, he feareth not the noise of the drum nor the rolling of the smoke, and careth not for the din of the cannon. He cometh up, he heareth a faithful warning, and he saith, "What of it? this is for the wicked." He heareth an

affectionate invitation, and he saith, "Go thy way, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." And so he comes and goes up to the house of God and back again. Like the door upon its hinges he turns into the sanctuary to-day, and out of it to-morrow. "He comes and goes from the place of the holy." It may be, however, he goes even further. Almost persuaded to be a Christian by some sermon from a Paul, he trembles at his feet. He thinks he really repents; he unites himself with the Christian church: he makes a profession of religion; but, alas! his heart has never been changed. The sow is washed, but it is the sow still. The dog has been driven from its vomit, but its doggish nature is there the same. The Ethiopian is clothed in a white garment, but he hath not changed his skin. The leopard hath been covered all over, but he hath not washed his spots away. He is the same as ever he was. He goes to the baptismal pool a black sinner, and he comes out of it the same. He goes to the table of the Lord a deceiver; he eats the bread and drinks the wine, and he returns the same. Sacrament after Sacrament passes away. The Holy Eucharist is broken in his presence; he receives it, but he comes and he goes, for he receives it not in the love of it. He is a stranger to vital godliness, and as a wicked man "he comes and he goes from the place of the holy."

But is it not a marvellous thing that men should be able to do this? I have sometimes heard a preacher so earnestly put the matter of salvation before men, that I have said, "Surely they must see this." I have heard him plead as though he pleaded for his own life, and I have said, "Surely they must feel this." And I have turned round, and I have seen the handkerchief used to brush away the tear, and I have said, "Good must follow this." You have brought your own friends under the sound of the Word, and you have prayed the whole sermon through that the arrow may reach the white and penetrate the centre of the mark, and you said to yourself, "What an appropriate discourse." Still you kept on praying, and you were pleased to see that there was some emotion. You said, "Oh, it will touch his heart at last." But is it not strange that, though wooed by love divine, man will not melt; though thundered at by Sinai's own terrific thunderbolts they will not tremble; yea, though Christ himself incarnate in the flesh should preach again, yet would they not regard him, and mayhap would treat him to-day as their parents did but yesterday, when they dragged him out of the city and would have cast him headlong from the summit of the mount on which the city was builded. I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy till his conscience was seared, as with a hot iron. I have seen him come and go from the place of the holy till he had become harder than the nether millstone, till he was past feeling, given up "to work all manner of uncleanness with greediness."

But now we are going to change our journey. Instead of going to the house of God we will go another way. I have seen the wicked go to the place of the holy, that is to the *judgment bench*. We have had glaring instances even in the criminal calendar of men who have been seen sitting on a judgment bench one day, and in a short time they have been standing at the dock themselves. I have wondered what must be the peculiar feelings of a man who officiates as a judge, knowing that he who judges has been a law-breaker himself. A wicked man, a greedy, lustful, drunken man—you know such are to be discovered among petty magistrates. We have known these sit and condemn the drunkard, when, had the world known how they went to bed the night before, they would have said of them, "Thou that judgest another doest the same things thyself." There have been instances known of men who have condemned a poor wretch for shooting a rabbit or stealing a few pheasants' eggs, or some enormous crime like that, and they themselves have been robbing the coffers of the bank, embezzling funds to an immense extent, and cheating everybody. How singular they must feel. One would think it must be a very strange emotion that passes over a man when he executes the law upon one which he knows ought to be executed upon himself. And yet, I have seen the wicked come and go from the holy place, until he came to think that his sins were no sins, that the poor must be severely upbraided for their iniquities, that what he called the lower classes must be kept in check, not thinking that there are none so low as those who condemn others whilst they do the same things themselves; speaking about checks and barriers, when neither check nor barrier were of any use to himself; talking of curbing others and of judging righteous judgment, when had righteous judgment been carried out to the letter, he would himself have been the prisoner, and not have been honoured with a commission from government. Ah!

is it not a sight that we may well look at, when we see justice perverted and the law turned upside down by men who "come and go from the place of the holy."

But the third case is worse still. "I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy"—that is, the *pulpit*. If there be a place under high heaven more holy than another, it is the pulpit whence the gospel is preached. This is the Thermophylæ of Christendom; here must the great battle be fought between Christ's church and the invading hosts of a wicked world. This is the last vestige of anything sacred that is left to us. We have no altars now; Christ is our altar: but we have a pulpit still left, a place which, when a man entereth, he might well put off his shoes from his feet, for the place whereon he standeth is holy. Consecrated by a Saviour's presence, established by the clearness and the force of an apostle's eloquence, maintained and upheld by the faithfulness and fervour of a succession of Evangelists who, like stars, have marked the era in which they lived, and stamped it with their names, the pulpit is handed down to those of us who occupy it now with a prestige of everything that is great and holy. Yet I have seen the wicked come and go from it. Alas! if there be a sinner that is hardened, it is the man that sins and occupies his pulpit. We have heard of such a man living in the commission of the foulest sins, and at length has been discovered; and yet such is the filthiness of mankind, that when he began to preach to the people again, they clustered round the beast for the mere sake of hearing what he would say to them. We have known cases, too, where men, when convicted to their own forehead, have unblushingly persevered in proclaiming a gospel which their lives denied. And perhaps these are the hardest of all sinners to deal with. But if the garment be once defiled, away with all thoughts of the pulpit then! He must be clean who ministers at the altar. Every saint must be holy, but he, holiest of all, who seeks to serve his God. Yet, we must mourn to say it, the church of God every now and then has had a sun that was black instead of white, and a moon that was as a clot of blood, instead of being full of fairness and beauty. Happy the church when God gives her holy ministers; but unhappy the church where wicked men preside. I know ministers to this day, however, who know more about fishing rods than they do about chapters in the Bible; more about fox-hounds than about hunting after men's souls; who understand a great deal more of the spring and the net than they do of the net for catching souls, or earnest exhortations for men to flee from the wrath to come. We know such even now: still uproarious at a farmer's dinner, still the very loudest to give the toast and clash the glass, still mightiest among the mighty, found of the gay, the wild, and the dissolute. Pity on the church that still allows it! Happy the day when all such persons shall be purged from the pulpit; then shall it stand forth "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners." "I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy."

II. And now we are going to his funeral. I shall want you to attend it. You need not be particular about having on a hat band, or being arrayed in garments of mourning. It does not signify for the wretch we are going to bury. There is no need for any very great outward signs of mourning, for he will be forgotten even in the city where he hath done this: therefore we need not particularly mourn for him. Let us first go to the funeral and look at the outward ceremonial. We will suppose one or two cases.

There is a man who has come and gone from the place of the holy. He has made a very blazing profession. He has been a county magistrate. Now, do you see what a stir is made about his poor bones? There is the hearse covered with plumes, and there follows a long string of carriages. The country people stare to see such a long train of carriages coming to follow one poor worm to its resting-place. What pomp! what grandeur! See how the place of worship is hung with black. There seems to be intense mourning made over this man. Will you just think of it for a minute, and who are they mourning for? A hypocrite! Whom is all this pomp for? For one who was a wicked man; a man who made a pretension of religion; a man who judged others, and who ought to have been condemned himself. All this pomp for putrid clay; and what is it more or better than that? When such a man dies, ought he not to be buried with the burial of an ass? Let him be drawn and dragged from the gates of the city. What has he to do with pomp? At the head of the mournful cavalcade is Beelzebub, leading the procession, and, looking back with twinkling eye, and leer of malicious joy, says, "Here is fine pomp

to conduct a soul to hell with!" Ah! plumes and hearse for the man who is being conducted to his last abode in Tophet! A string of carriages to do honour to the man whom God hath cursed in life and cursed in death; for the hope of the hypocrite is evermore an accursed one. And a bell is ringing, and the clergyman is reading the funeral service, and is burying the man "in sure and certain hope." Oh! what a laugh rings up from somewhere a little lower down than the grave! "In sure and certain hope," says Satan; 'ha! ha! your sure and certain hope is folly indeed. Trust to a bubble, and hope to fly to the stars; trust to the wild winds, that they shall conduct you safely to heaven; but trust to such a hope as that, and thou art a madman indeed.' Oh! if we judged rightly, when a hypocrite died, we should do him no honour. If men could but see a little deeper than the skin, and read the thoughts of the heart, they would not patronize this great, black lie, and lead a long string of carriages through the streets; they would say, "No, the man was good for nothing, he was the outward skin without the life; he professed to be what he was not; he lived the scornful life of a deceiver; let him have the burial of Jeconiah; let him not have a funeral at all; let him be cast away as loathsome carrion, for that is all he is." Ah! when a godly man dies, ye may make lamentation over him, ye may well carry him with solemn pomp unto his grave, for there is an odour in his bones, there is a sweet savour about him that even God delighteth in, for "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." But the gilded hypocrite, the varnished deceiver, the well accounted wolf in sheeps' clothing—away with pomp for him! Why should men bewail him? They do not do it; why should they pretend to do so, then, and give the outward semblance of a grief, where they feel none?

But possibly I may have seen the wicked man buried in a more quiet way. He is taken quietly to his tomb with as little pomp as possible, and he is with all decency and solemnity interred in the grave. And now listen to the minister. If he is a man of God, when he buries such a man as he ought to be buried, you do not hear a solitary word about the character of the deceased; you hear nothing at all about any hopes of everlasting life. He is put into his grave. The minister well remembers how he did "come and go from the place of the holy;" he recollects full well how he used to sit in the gallery and listen to his discourse. And there is one who weeps; and the minister stands there and weeps too, to think how all his labour has been lost, and one of his hearers has been destroyed, and that without hope. But note how cautiously he speaks, even to the wife. He would give her all the hope he could, poor widow as she is, and he speaks very gently. She says, "I hope my husband is in heaven." He holds his tongue; he is very silent; if he is of a sympathetic nature he will be quiet. And when he speaks about the deceased in his next Sunday's sermon, if he mentions him at all, he refers to him as a doubtful case; he uses him rather as a beacon than as an example, and bids other men beware how they presume to waste their opportunities, and let the golden hours of their Sabbath-day roll by disregarded. "I have seen the wicked buried who have come and gone from the place of the holy." As for the pompous funeral, that was ludicrous. A man might almost laugh to see the folly of honouring the man who deserved to be dishonoured, but as for the still and silent and truthful funeral, how sad it is! But brethren, after all, we ought to judge ourselves very much in the light of our funerals. That is the way we judge other things. Look at your fields to-morrow. There is the flaunting poppy, and there by the hedge-rows are many flowers that lift their heads to the sun. Judging them by their leaf, you might prefer them to the sober coloured wheat. But wait until the funeral when the poppy shall be gathered and the weeds shall be bound up in a bundle to be burned—gathered into a heap in the field to be consumed, to be made into manure for the soil. But see the funeral of the wheat. What a magnificent funeral has the wheat-sheaf. "Harvest home" is shouted as it is carried to the garner, for it is a precious thing. Even so let each of us so live, as considering that we must die. Oh! I would desire to live that when I leave this mortal state, men may say, "There is one gone who sought to make the world better. However rough his efforts might have been, he was an honest man; he sought to serve God, and there lies he that feared not the face of man." I would have every Christian seek to win such a funeral as this—a funeral like Stephen's: "And devout men carried him to his sepulchre, and made great lamentation over him." I remember the funeral of one pastor—I attended it. Many ministers of the gospel walked behind the coffin to attend their brother, and pay honour to him;

and then came a long string of members of the church, every one of whom wept as if they had lost a father. And I remember the solemn sermon that was preached in the chapel, all hung with black, when all of us wept because a great man had fallen that day in Israel. We felt that a prince had been taken from us, and we all said, like Elijah's servant, "My father, my father, the horses of Israel and the chariots thereof." But I have seen the wicked buried that have come and gone from the place of the holy, and I saw nothing of this sort. I saw a flickering kind of sorrow, like the dying of a wick that is almost consumed. I saw that those who paid a decent respect to the corpse did it for the widow's sake, and for the sake of them that were left behind; but if they could have dealt with the corpse as their nature seemed to dictate, they ought to have dealt with the man when living; they would have said, "Let him be buried at the dead of night; let him have some unhallowed corner in the churchyard where the nettle long has grown; let the frog croak o'er his tomb; let the owl make her resting-place o'er his sepulchre, and let her hoot all night long, for hooted he well deserves to be; let no laurel and no cypress grow upon his grave, and let no rose twine itself as a sweet bower around the place where he sleeps; let no cowslip and no lily of the valley deck the grass that covereth him; there let him lie; let not the green sward grow, but let the place be accursed where sleeps the hypocrite, for he deserves it, and even so let it be." "I have seen the wicked buried who have come and gone from the place of the holy."

But there is a sad thing yet to come. We must look a little deeper than the mere ceremonial of the burial, and we shall see that there is a great deal more in some people's coffins besides their corpses. When old Robert Flockart was buried a few weeks ago in Edinburgh, he was buried as I think a Christian minister should be, for his old Bible and hymn book were placed upon the top of the coffin. Had he been a soldier, I suppose he would have had his sword put there; but he had been a Christian soldier, and so they buried with him his Bible and hymn book as his trophies. It was well that such a trophy should be on that coffin; but there is a great deal, as I have said, *inside* some people's coffins. If we had eyes to see invisible things, and we could break the lid of the hypocrite's coffin, we should see a great deal there. There lie all his hopes. The wicked man may come and go from the place of the holy, but he has no hope of being saved. He thought, because he had attended the place of the holy regularly, therefore he was safe for another world. There lie his hopes, and they are to be buried with him. Of all the frightful things that a man can look upon, the face of a dead hope is the most horrible. A dead child is a pang indeed to a mother's heart; a dead wife or a dead husband, to the heart of the bereaved must be sorrowful indeed; but a coffin full of dead hopes—did you ever see such a load of misery carried to the grave as that? Wrapt in the same shroud, there lie all his dead pretensions. When he was here he made a pretension of being respectable; there lies his respect, he shall be a hissing and a reproach for ever. He made a pretension of being sanctified, but the mask is off now, and he stands in all his native blackness. He made pretensions about being God's elect, but his election is discovered now to be a rejection. He thought himself to be clothed in the Saviour's righteousness, but he finds that he justified himself: Christ had never given him his imputed righteousness. And so he sleeps. The tongue that prattled once so pleasantly concerning godliness is now silent. That hypocritical eye that once flashed with the pretended fire of joy—it is all now dark, dark. That brain that thought of inventions to deceive—the worm shall feed on it. And that heart of his, that once throbbed beneath ribs that were scarcely thick enough to hide the transparency of his hypocrisy shall now be devoured by demons. There are dead pretensions inside that rotting skeleton, and dead hopes too. But there is one thing that sleeps with him in his coffin that he had set his heart upon. He had set his heart upon being known after he was gone. He thought surely after he had departed this life, he would be handed down to posterity and be remembered. Now read the text—"And they were forgotten in the city where they had so done." There is his hope of fame. Every man likes to live a little longer than his life—Englishmen especially—for there is scarcely to be found a rock in all England up which even a goat might scarcely climb, where there may not be discovered the initials of the names of men, who

never had any other mode of attaining to fame, and therefore thought they would inscribe their names there. Go where you will, you find men attempting to be known; and this is the reason why many people write in newspapers, else they never would be known. A hundred little inventions we all of us have for keeping our names going after we are dead. But with the wicked man it is all in vain; he shall be forgotten. He has done nothing to make anybody remember him. Ask the poor; "Do you remember So-and-so?" "Hard master, sir, very. He always cut us down to the last sixpence; and we do not wish to recollect him." Their children won't hear his name; they will forget him entirely. Ask the church, "Do you remember So-and-so? he was a member." "Well," says one, "I remember him certainly, his name was on the books, but we never had his heart. He used to come and go, but I never could talk with him. There was nothing spiritual in him. There was a great deal of sounding bell-metal and brass, but no gold. I never could discover that he had the 'root of the matter in him.' No one thinks of him, and he will soon be forgotten. The chapel grows old, there comes up another congregation, and somehow or other they talk about the old deacons that used to be there, who were good and holy men, and about the old lady, that used to be so eminently useful in visiting the sick; about the young man who rose out of that church, who was so useful in the cause of God; but you never hear mention made of *his* name; he's quite forgotten. When he died his name was struck out of the books; he was reported as being dead, and all remembrance of him died with him. I have often noticed how soon wicked things die when the man dies who originated them. Look at Voltaire's philosophy; with all the noise it made in his time—where is it now? There is just a little of it lingering, but it seems to have gone. And there was Tom Paine, who did his best to write his name in letters of damnation, and one would think he might have been remembered. But who cares for him now? Except amongst a few, here and there, his name has passed away. And all the names of error, and heresy, and schism, where do they go? You hear about St. Austin to this day, but you never hear about the heretics he attacked. Everybody knows about Athanasius, and how he stood up for the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ; but we have almost forgotten the life of Arius, and scarcely ever think of those men who aided and abetted him in his folly. Bad men die out quickly, for the world feels it is a good thing to be rid of them; they are not worth remembering. But the death of a good man, the man who was sincerely a Christian—how different is that! And when you see the body of a saint, if he has served God with all his might, how sweet it is to look upon him—ah, and to look upon his coffin too, or upon his tomb in after years! Go into Bunhill-fields, and stand by the memorial of John Bunyan, and you will say, "Ah! there lies the head that contained the brain which thought out that wondrous dream of the Pilgrim's Progress from the City of Destruction to the Better land. There lies the finger that wrote those wondrous lines which depict the story of him who came at last to the land Beulah, and waded through the flood, and entered into the celestial city. And there are the eyelids which he once spoke of, when he said, 'If I lie in prison until the moss grows on my eyelids, I will never make a promise to withhold from preaching.'" And there is that bold eye that penetrated the judge, when he said, "If you will let me out of prison to-day, I will preach again to-morrow, by the help of God." And there lies that loving hand that was ever ready to receive into communion all them that loved the Lord Jesus Christ: I love the hand that wrote the book, "Water Baptism no Bar to Christian Communion." I love him for that sake alone, and if he had written nothing else but that, I would say, "John Bunyan, be honoured for ever." And there lies the foot that carried him up Snow Hill to go and make peace between a father and a son, in that cold day, which cost him his life. Peace to his ashes! Wait, O John Bunyan, till thy Master sends his angel to blow the trumpet; and methinks, when the archangel sounds it, he will almost think of thee, and this shall be a part of his joy, that honest John Bunyan, the greatest of all Englishmen, shall rise from his tomb at the blowing of that great trumpet. You cannot say so of the wicked. What is a wicked man's body but a rotten piece of noisomeness? Put it away, and thank God there are worms to eat such a thing up, and thank him still more, that there is a worm called Time, to eat up the evil influence and the accursed memory, which such a man leaves behind

him. "All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done."

III. We are to WRITE HIS EPITAPH; and his epitaph is contained in these short words: "this also is vanity." And now in a few words I will endeavour to show that it is vanity for a man to come and go from the house of God, and yet have no true religion. If I made up my mind to hate God, to sin against him, and to be lost at last, I would do it thoroughly, out and out. If I had determined to be damned, and had calculated the chances, and made up my mind that it would be better to be cast away for ever, I know there is one thing I would not do, I would not go to the house of God. Why, if I made up my mind to be lost, what is the good of going there to be teased about it? Because, if the man is faithful, he will prick my conscience and wake me up. If I am determined and have made up my mind to be lost, let me go to hell as easily as I can; what need is there that my conscience should be pricked, and this great stone laid in my way to keep me from going there? Besides, I hold that, for a man who has no love for the house of God, regularly to attend because he thinks it is respectable, is just one of the most pitiful kinds of drudgery that can be met with. If I did not love the house of God, I would not go there. If it were not a delight to me to be found in the sanctuary of God, singing of his praise, and hearing of his word, I would stop away. To be seen going to chapel twice on the Sabbath, sitting as God's people sit, rising when they rise, and singing about what you do not feel; hearing that which pricks your conscience, and listening to the reading of promises that do not belong to you; hearing about heaven, that is not yours, being frightened with hell, which is to be yours for ever—why, the man is just a born fool that goes to the house of God, except he has got an interest in it. We may commend him for going; it is a respectable thing, perhaps, and right that it should be so; but I submit it is an intolerable drudgery to go always to the house of God, if you have made up your mind to be lost. Now, on this man's tomb must be written at last—"There was a man who would not serve God, but who had not courage enough to stand out against God. There is a man so silly that he pretended to be religious, and so wicked that he was a hypocrite to his pretensions." Why, although you must deplore a wicked man's wickedness as a fearful crime, yet there is some kind of respect to be paid to the man who is downright honest in it; but not an atom of respect to the man who wants to be a cant and a hypocrite. He wishes, if he can, just to save his neck at last; just, as he thinks, to do enough to let him get off free when he comes to lay a-dying; enough to keep his conscience quiet, enough to look respectable; enough as he thinks, when he dies to give him a little chance of entering heaven, though it be, as it were, neck or nothing. Ah, poor thing! Well may we write over him, "This also is vanity!" But, sir, you will be more laughed at for your pretensions than if you had made none. Having professed to be religious, and having pretended to carry it out, you shall have more scorn than if you had come out in your right colours, and have said, "Who is the Lord, that I should fear him? Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice?" And now, are there any here who are so wicked as to choose eternal wrath? Have I any here so besotted as to choose destruction? Yes, yes, many; for if to-day, my hearer, thou art choosing sin; if thou art choosing self-righteousness, if thou art choosing pride, or lust, or the pleasures of this world; remember, thou art choosing damnation, for the two things cannot but go together. Sin is the guilt, and hell is the bread beneath it. If you choose sin, you have virtually chosen perdition. Think of this, I beseech you.

"O Lord! do thou the sinner turn!
Now rouse him from his senseless state;
O let him not thy counsel spurn,
Nor rue his fatal choice too late."

May the Lord lead you to Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life! And when ye are buried, may ye be buried with the righteous, and may your last end be like his!

“THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S, AND THE
FULNESS THEREOF.”

An Open-Air Service

ON THE STEPS OF

THE ROYAL EXCHANGE,

LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, JUNE 13, 1858.

CONDUCTED BY

THE REV. T. RICHARDSON,

Curate of St. Olave, Old Jewry, Chesapeake, London.

LONDON:

J. PAUL, CHAPTER-HOUSE COURT, ST. PAUL’S.

Price One Penny.

"THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND THE FULNESS THEREOF."

THE worship of God was commenced by singing the following hymn:—

(TUNE—*Turo.*)

The Lord shall reign where'er the sun,
Doth his successive journeys run;
His power extend from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

People and realms of every tongue,
To Him shall raise the grateful song;
And Jews with Gentiles shall proclaim
The glories of Immanuel's name.

Blessings abound where'er He reigns;
The pris'ner leaps to loose his chains;
The weary find eternal rest;
And all the sons of want are blest.

Let ev'ry creature rise and bring
The noblest honours to our King;
Angels descend with songs again,
And heaven and earth repeat the strain.

A short prayer was then offered up, that the life-giving power of the Holy Ghost might enable the preacher so to speak, and the hearers so to receive, the Word of God, that each might be blessed for the sake of Jesus Christ. Several of the congregation joined in the Lord's prayer; after which the attention of the crowd was directed to

PSALM XXIV.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

"For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

No. 2,958.

2 E

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S,

"He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

"This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

"Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

"Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory."

The first verse of the above Psalm was selected as the text.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

It is said by those who have commented upon the Word of God, that this Psalm is supposed to have been written upon the occasion of the ark of the Lord being brought up from the house of Obed Edom unto Mount Zion in Jerusalem, and that it was this which gave occasion for the closing of the Psalm: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye left up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." And I have taken this text on an occasion of rejoicing, that the ark of the Lord is permitted to be placed upon this spot; that the ark of the Lord is permitted to be opened upon the steps of the Royal Exchange. If you open the ark of the Lord, you will find the written Word of God therein; and if you will open that written Word, you will see the words which our forefathers had read and valued, and which they accordingly placed as a motto on this building. "The Earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." It is to this Psalm that I shall now direct your attention, and in so doing I shall speak—

I. Of the Message of Creation. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." Can we really comprehend that this earth is moving at a speed which we can scarcely grapple with? when we remember that the earth is moving round that great centre the sun; that this world is one of those tiny stars which deck the heavens night by night; one of those bodies over which the sun seems to have an influence; if we can grapple with this idea, we can cordially say, with the Psalmist, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

Man did not make the sun—man did not make the moon—man did not place this wonderful globe to move in space with that rapidity with which it does—and yet, ever since the creation, she has moved onward and onward, interfering with none of the rest of the heavenly bodies, nor they interfering with her. In creation—when this great globe was called out of nothing, it was the Lord's; so in preservation, this planet moving along in space was, and is the Lord's; so that we are enabled to declare with the Psalmist, "The earth is the Lord's. Descending from creation, as a whole, and examining the productions of the earth, to whom do they belong? The original persons who placed that motto where it is, knew to whom the objects which are here passing from hand to hand during six days of the week belonged. They knew from whom all those productions came. Where would be the use of our ships if there were no productions given by the Lord, who sends seed time and harvest, summer and winter, spring and autumn? What would the use of our freights be, if the giver of all that is freighted never gave any increase? Yes, with the promoters of this great building we will declare, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Take our own country, with its coal and iron, and copper and slate, in the bowels of the earth; look at its ships which are going to and fro transferring the productions of the earth from place to place, and drawing an immense amount of business to this one great centre of attraction. Yea! "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Yea! it is God who causes the sun to shine and the rain to descend upon the just and upon the unjust; man may sow

AND THE FULNESS THEREOF.

and man may water, but it is God who gives the increase, so truly is it that "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

Pass over to America, and who is it that produces those magnificent trees? is it man? No. Man cannot make even a blade of grass; it is God who makes these mighty trees to grow, and to become in time so useful to mankind. From the north you have oil, from the south you receive the fruits of the earth; the east sends you tea, and the west sends you sugar; but all is given by God. So, again, if we look from any point of view, at that which is transferred and transacted in this busy place six days in the week—whether they be stocks, funds, or railway shares, or whatever they may be—they are all the gifts of God; for man, of himself, makes nothing, but as the Psalmist affirms, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

But then there is a concluding portion of this text. This text is applicable to six days in the week, but God when he made the week gave it seven days, six days for labour, and one day for rest; and therefore, while we accept this motto during the six days in which we transact our business, we must not forget when the seventh day comes, and we congregate here, to open the ark of the Lord, and content ourselves with simply saying, "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." We must not stay at the half of the verse, but go on to the end, and bring before you the rest of the verse. While creation cries out, "The Earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," I would say—

II. *The Message of Redemption adds, "the world and they that dwell therein."*

We are met here on the Lord's day, and we are thankful to believe that those who are interested in this great establishment during six days of the week are by no means opposed to the Word of the Lord being preached here on the seventh day of the week; and therefore it is that I say, that while this motto would do for the six days, the seventh-day portion of the verse, "The world is the Lord's, and they that dwell therein," must not be overlooked. The first portion of the verse refers to the Creator, while the second part alludes more particularly to the Redeemer. Yes! we cannot go into heaven, but we can look at that man who when he was upon earth was found rebuking the winds, and they obeyed him. We cannot go into heaven, but we can behold that man who walked upon the sea as upon dry land. We cannot go into heaven to see God, but we can behold that man sailing in a ship, comfortable and happy in his sleep, waked up by his friends, who exclaimed, "Lord, save us, or we perish." We can listen to Him rebuking the seas and reducing them to "a great calm." We cannot go to heaven to understand God, but we can stand by the grave with Mary and Martha and the Jews who surrounded them. We can weep with them and with Jesus, and wonder, as he cried out, "Lazarus, come forth!" and he came forth. Jesus, when on earth, proved that "the earth was the Lord's, the world, and they that dwell therein."

Behold the child which was born in Bethlehem. Follow the star which was seen in the East, and which directed the Magi to the place where the young child was. Follow the young child, and behold Him at the age of twelve putting questions to the doctors and listening to their answers, and then declaring to His father and His mother, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business." Follow Him when He became a man, and had not where to lay His head—"He came to His own, and His own received Him not;" behold that man and mark His silence before His accusers. See Him agonizing in the garden, as He cries out to His Father, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not my will but thine be done." See the perspiration (as it were great drops of blood) running from His body; yet He had power to raise the dead, He had power to turn five loaves into sufficient food for five thousand men, besides women and children. Behold Him agonizing in Gethsemane with the weight of sin resting upon Him. God tells us in Isaiah, that He "laid upon Him the iniquities of us all." "All!" Yes! God be praised! "By his stripes we are healed." God tells us that He shall pour out His soul even unto death; and Jesus, the holy, the just, and the good—Jesus, against whom no man could bring a charge—Jesus whom no man could convince of sin, came to pour his soul out unto death. He died for man—to redeem him; and as He approached that death, anticipation was worse than reality. From Gethsemane He goes forth confi-

dently, yet silently, before Pilate. Pilate "finds no fault in Him at all;" but He is taken and crucified between two thieves—a holy and a kind man! If that were now done in this vast city—if the Queen herself had commanded an innocent man to be destroyed in this manner, the whole heart of the nation would rise as one man and protest against it; but the Lord had laid His hands upon one that is mighty to save. The Jews cried out, "Let Him be crucified;" and Jesus silently echoed the cry, "Let Him be crucified." The redeemed of the earth would cry out, "Let Him be crucified;" and He was crucified. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," as the great Creator; "The world and they that dwell therein," are the Lord's as the great Redeemer. Yes, my friends, a more noble, a more Christ-like, a more evangelical text, could not have been chosen, than that which is placed on the front of this building; for it begins one of the most glorious, most redeeming, as well as most spiritual Psalms in the whole collection.

This, then, is the Lord's day, and the Lord's day portion of the text, and now we must pass on to consider that, as Jesus was crucified and died, it is necessary for us to ask why he died? It was the purchase price, not with silver, nor with gold, nor with things corruptible, but as we are created by the great God; so are we redeemed without price; the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ was paid as the price, and were I not to declare this glorious truth, the dead walls themselves declare it—"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein."

So the revealed Word of God tells you, and it directs you to Him. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price"—the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And let this truth be fixed on your minds and hearts, that ye are *redeemed* as well as *created*; and that if created and redeemed, whose are you? If created, ye are created by God, and are His; and if redeemed, ye are redeemed by Jesus, and are His.

Then let me refer to another portion of the Psalm, and ask the question: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?"

As (1) *creation* utters its voice, and as (2) *redemption* utters its voice, so,

III. *Salvation has a Message to deliver.* We are told that those who ascend the hill of the Lord, and stand in His holy place, must have clean hands and a pure heart. This is the message of salvation. A man with a renewed heart and holy life is a member of the Church invisible, he is a child of God, he is a member of the body of Christ, and this is the message made known in the Psalm, "They that have clean hands"—this implies repentance and holy living. A complete change of conduct may be seen in a man, but that is not salvation; it is not the simple abandonment—it is not the man who is not *seen* to steal, it is the man who does not *wish* to steal; it is not the outward appearance, which may be as a "whitened sepulchre, which is inwardly full of dead men's bones"—there must be clean hands and a pure heart; this is the message of salvation. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."

Those who are redeemed, those who are thus saved, and have received the blessing of the Lord, and righteousness from the God of their salvation, should remember, however, that their salvation is no more of themselves than their creation and redemption are of themselves. The Psalmist says, "This is the generation of them that seek thy face, O God of Jacob."

Now let us come to the conclusion or application of the whole: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." Those without the ark of God, the Lord the Creator stands and asks you to accept it and what it contains. You cannot go to God, but God asks to come to you. He tells you that ye are not your own; Jesus tells you that ye are not your own; and as ye are not your own, "Lift up your heads to Him, O ye gates, and the King of Glory shall come in." Come in! Yes; open the door of your heart, and the King of Glory shall come in! Is it a question of doubt? Do you say, *How can I open my heart?* I am not able to do so.—You say, "Salvation is of the Lord." What! have you so little hope in God, and are you so far from Him that you cannot cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" Remember the secret prayer of Saul is thus recorded in Heaven, "Behold he

AND THE FULNESS THEREOF.

prayeth." Yes, it is the opening up of the heart—the opening as it were of the mind and of the soul, by faith and prayer, to receive the Lord Jesus. The Spirit's work is to convince us of sin, and of righteousness; yes, the Spirit teaches us what we want, and reveals to us that which can supply our want. It creates a thirst, and shows us that only Christ can quench it. It excites our hunger, and points us to Jesus, as "the bread of life." "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." Yes, it is only the Lord Jesus who can enable us to fight against the devil, "Who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" it is God alone who can enable you to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. You must have "Christ in you, the hope of Glory!" You must "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" and let the Spirit of Christ dwell in you richly, and then you will find out that repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ have been the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness, from the God of your Salvation.

Do you still inquire, who is this King of Glory? I am reminded, my dear friends, of our own good Queen; when she comes into our city, she has to remain outside Temple Bar, which is closed for the occasion till she receives, from the hands of the representative of the citizens, the key and the invitation to come in. If the Queen of England should come to the door, how loyally would you open it, and how much more readily ought you to open the door of your hearts to the King of Glory, who seeks admission, especially when he says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." The word of God represents Him as addressing us as responsible beings, and asking for admission, Jesus having told the people that all power in heaven and earth was given unto Him, said "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" He said unto His disciples, As all things in heaven and upon earth are committed into my hands, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, and lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Then, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." Here, then, is your Creator, your Redeemer, and your Regenerator, waiting to bless you; pray, therefore, for that Spirit which breaks the hard heart; pray for that godly spirit which receives God's Word, and you will find the entrance of God's Word giveth light,—you will find it as "a lamp unto your feet, and as a light unto your path;" the message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!" "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and will open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." "Lift up your heads, O ye gates."

Then the last clause says, "Who is this King of Glory?" and the answer is, "The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory!" Oh, what a glorious scene, my fellow citizens, when we meet again before the judgment seat of Christ. When those on the left hand shall depart, and when He says to those on His right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The Lord himself is the Captain of our salvation; He has led captivity captive, and He will make us more than conquerors, He will bring us all safely home at last, and then shall we say, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors." Then shall He come before His Father's throne and say, "Here am I, and those whom Thou hast given me." And now to God the Father, &c.

The two last verses of the following hymn were then sung.

(TUNE—*Miles' Lane*.)

All hail the Great Immanuel's name!
Ye angels, prostrate fall:
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND THE FULNESS THEREOF.

Crown Him, ye martyrs of your God,
Who from His altar call :
Extol the stem of Jesse's rod,
And crown Him Lord of all.

Let every kindred, every tribe,
Around this earthly ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe,
And crown Him Lord of all.

Oh, that with yonder sacred throng,
We at his feet may fall;
There join the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all.

The service was closed with a short prayer and the blessing.

It was announced that these services would be repeated (D.V.) every Sunday afternoon, at half-past five o'clock, until further notice.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 20, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word."—Acts x. 44.

THE Bible is a book of the Revelation of God. The God after whom the heathen blindly searched, and for whom reason gropes in darkness, is here plainly revealed to us in the pages of divine authorship, so that he who is willing to understand as much of Godhead as man can know, may here learn it if he be not willingly ignorant and wilfully obstinate. The doctrine of the Trinity is specially taught in Holy Scripture. The word certainly does not occur, but the three divine persons of the One God are frequently and constantly mentioned, and Holy Scripture is exceedingly careful that we should all receive and believe that great truth of the Christian religion, that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God: though they be each of them very God of very God, yet three in one and one in three is the Jehovah whom we worship. You will notice in the works of *Creation* how carefully the Scriptures assure us that all the three divine persons took their share. "In the beginning Jehovah created the heavens and the earth;" and in another place we are told that God said "Let us make man"—not one person, but all three taking counsel with each other with regard to the making of mankind. We know that the Father hath laid the foundations and fixed those solid beams of light on which the blue arches of the sky are sustained; but we know with equal certainty that Jesus Christ, the eternal *Logos*, was with the Father in the beginning, and "without him was not anything made that was made:" moreover we have equal certainty that the Holy Spirit had a hand in Creation, for we are told that "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the earth; and the spirit of the Lord moved upon the face of the waters;" and brooding with his dove-like wing, he brought out of the egg of chaos this mighty thing, the fair round world. We have the like proof of the three persons in the Godhead in the matter of *Salvation*. We know that God the Father gave his Son; we have abundant proof that God the Father chose his people from before the foundations of the world, that he did invent the plan of salvation, and hath always given his free, willing, and joyous consent to the salvation of his people. With regard to the share that the Son had in salvation, that is apparent enough to all. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he was incarnate in a mortal body; he was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hades; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven; he sitteth at the right hand of God, where also

he maketh intercession for us. As to the Holy Spirit, we have equally sure proof that the Spirit of God worketh in conversion; for everywhere we are said to be begotten of the Holy Spirit; continually it is declared, that unless a man be born again from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God; while all the virtues and the graces of Christianity are described as being the fruits of the Spirit, because the Holy Spirit doth from first to last work in us and carry out that which Jesus Christ hath beforehand worked for us in his great redemption, which also God the Father hath designed for us in his great predestinating scheme of salvation.

Now, it is to the work of the Holy Spirit that I shall this morning specially direct your attention; and I may as well mention the reason why I do so. It is this. We have received continually fresh confirmations of the good news from a far country, which has already made glad the hearts of many of God's people. In the United States of America there is certainly a great awakening. No sane man living there could think of denying it. There may be something of spurious excitement mixed up with it, but that good, lasting good, has been accomplished, no rational man can deny. Two hundred and fifty thousand persons—that is a quarter of a million—profess to have been regenerated since December last, have made a profession of their faith, and have united themselves with different sections of God's church. The work still progresses, if anything, at a more rapid rate than before, and that which makes me believe the work to be genuine is just this—that the enemies of Christ's holy gospel are exceedingly wroth at it. When the devil roars at anything, you may rest assured there is some good in it. The devil is not like some dogs we know of; he never barks unless there is something to bark at. When Satan howls, we may rest assured he is afraid his kingdom is in danger. Now this great work in America has been manifestly caused by the outpouring of the Spirit, for no one minister has been a leader in it. All the ministers of the gospel have co-operated in it, but none of them have stood in the van. God himself has been the leader of his own hosts. It began with a desire for prayer. God's people began to pray; the prayer-meetings were better attended than before; it was then proposed to hold meetings at times that have never been set apart for prayer; these also were well attended; and now, in the city of Philadelphia, at the hour of noon, every day in the week, three thousand persons can always be seen assembled together for prayer in one place. Men of business, in the midst of their toil and labour, find an opportunity of running in there and offering a word of prayer, and then return to their occupations. And so, throughout all the States, prayer-meetings, larger or smaller in number, have been convened. And there has been real prayer. Sinners beyond all count, have risen up in the prayer-meeting, and have requested the people of God to pray for them; thus making public to the world that they had a desire after Christ; they have been prayed for, and the church has seen that God verily doth hear and answer prayer. I find that the Unitarian ministers for a little while took no notice of it. Theodore Parker snarls and raves tremendously at it, but he is evidently in a maze; he does not understand the mystery, and acts with regard to it as swine are said to do with pearls. While the church was found asleep, and doing very little, the Socinian could afford to stand in his pulpit and sneer at anything like evangelical religion, but now that there has been an awakening, he looks like a man that has just awakened out of sleep. He sees something; he does not know what it is. The power of religion is just that which will always puzzle the Unitarian, for he knows but little about that. At the form of religion he is not much amazed, for he can to an extent endorse that himself, but the supernaturalism of the gospel—the mystery—the miracle—the power—the demonstration of the Spirit that comes with the preaching, is what such men cannot comprehend, and they gaze and wonder, and then become filled with wrath; but still they have to confess there is something there they cannot understand, a mental phenomenon that is far beyond their philosophy—a thing which they cannot reach by all their science, nor understand by all their reason.

Now, if we have the like effect produced in this land, the one thing we must seek is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and I thought, perhaps, this morning in preaching upon the work of the Holy Spirit, that text might be fulfilled—"Him that honoureth me I will honour." My sincere desire is to honour the Holy Spirit this morning, and if he will be pleased to honour his church in return, unto him shall be the glory for ever.

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word."

THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

In the first place, I shall endeavour to describe *the method of the Spirit's operation*; secondly, *the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence*, if we could see men converted; and then, in the third place, I shall suggest the ways and means by which under divine grace we may obtain a like falling down of the Spirit upon our churches.

1. In the first place, then, I will endeavour to explain **THE METHOD OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S OPERATIONS**. But let me guard myself against being misunderstood. We can explain what the Spirit does, but how he does it, no man must pretend to know. The work of the Holy Spirit is the peculiar mystery of the Christian religion. Almost any other thing is plain, but this must remain an inscrutable secret into which it were wrong for us to attempt to pry. Who knoweth where the winds are begotten? Who knoweth, therefore, how the Spirit worketh, for he is like the wind? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." In Holy Scripture certain great secrets of nature are mentioned as being parallel with the secret working of the Spirit. The procreation of children is instanced as a parallel wonder, for we know not the mystery thereof; how much less, therefore, shall we expect to know that more secret and hidden mystery of the new birth and new creation of man in Christ Jesus. But let no man be staggered at this, for they are mysteries in nature: the wisest man will tell you there are depths in nature into which he cannot dive, and heights into which he cannot soar. He who pretends to have unravelled the knot of creation hath made a mistake; he may have cut the knot by his rough ignorance, and by his foolish conjectures, but the knot itself must remain beyond the power of man's unravelling, until God himself shall explain the secret. There are marvellous things, that, as yet, men have sought to know in vain. They may, perhaps, discover many of them, but how the Spirit works, no man can know. But now I wish to explain what the Holy Spirit does, although we cannot tell how he does it. I take it that the Holy Spirit's work in conversion is two-fold. First, it is an awakening of the powers that man already has, and secondly, it is an implantation of powers which he never had at all.

In the great work of the new birth, the Holy Spirit first of all *awakens the mental powers*; for be it remembered that, the Holy Spirit never gives any man new *mental* powers. Take for instance reason—the Holy Spirit does not give men reason, for they have reason prior to their conversion. What the Holy Spirit does is to teach our reason, right reason—to set our reason in the right track, so that we can use it for the high purpose of discerning between good and evil; between the precious and vile. The Holy Spirit does not give man a will, for man has a will before; but he makes the will that was in bondage to Satan free to the service of God. The Holy Spirit gives no man the power to think, or the organ of belief—for man has power to believe or think as far as the mental act is concerned; but he gives that belief which is already there a tendency to believe the right thing, and he gives to the power of thought the propensity to think in the right way, so that instead of thinking irregularly, we begin to think as God would have us think, and our mind desireth to walk in the steps of God's revealed truth. There may be here, this morning, a man of enlarged understanding in things political—but his understanding is darkened with regard to spiritual things—he sees no beauty in the person of Christ—he sees nothing desirable in the way of holiness—he chooses the evil and forsakes the good. Now the Holy Spirit will not give him a new understanding, but he will cleanse his old understanding so that he will discern between things that differ, and shall discover that it is but a poor thing to enjoy "the pleasures of sin for a season," and let go an "eternal weight of glory." There shall be a man here too who is desperately set against religion, and wil'th not to come to God, and do what we will, we are not able to persuade him to change his mind and turn to God. The Holy Spirit will not make a new will in that man, but he will turn his old will, and instead of willing to do evil he will make him will to do right—he will make him will to be saved by Christ—he will make him "willing in the day of his power." Remember, there is no power in man so fallen but that the Holy Spirit can raise it up. However debased a man may be, in one instant, by the miraculous power of the Spirit, all his faculties may be cleansed and purged. Ill-judging reason may be made to judge rightly; stout, obstinate wills may be made to run willingly in the ways of God's commandments; evil and depraved affections may in an instant be turned

to Christ, and old desires that are tainted with vice, may be replaced by heavenly aspirations. The work of the Spirit on the mind is the re-modelling of it; the new forming of it. He doth not bring new materials to the mind—it is in another part of the man that he puts up a new structure—but he puts the mind that had fallen out of order into its proper shape. He builds up pillars that had fallen down, and erects the palaces that had crumbled to the earth. This is the first work of the Holy Spirit upon the mind of man.

Besides this, the Holy Spirit gives to men *powers which they never had before*. According to Scripture, I believe man is constituted in a three-fold manner. He has a body; by the Holy Spirit that body is made the temple of the Lord. He has a mind; by the Holy Spirit that mind is made like an altar in the temple. But man by nature is nothing higher than that; he is mere body and soul. When the Spirit comes, he breathes into him a third higher principle which we call the spirit. The apostle describes man as man, "body, soul and spirit." Now if you search all the mental writers through, you will find they all declare there are only two parts—body and mind; and they are quite right, for they deal with unregenerate man; but in regenerate man there is a third principle as much superior to mere mind as mind is superior to dead animal matter—that third principle is that with which a man prays; it is that with which he savingly believes; or rather it is that which compels the mind to perform their acts. It is that which, operating upon the mind, makes the same use of the mind as the mind does of the body. When, after desiring to walk I make my legs move, it is my mind that compels them; and so my Spirit, when I desire to pray, compels my mind to think the thought of prayer and compels my soul also, if I desire to praise, to think the thought of praise, and lift itself upward towards God. As the body without the soul is dead, so the soul without the Spirit is dead, and one work of the Spirit is to quicken the dead soul by breathing into it the living Spirit; as it is written, "The first man, Adam, was made a living *soul*, but the second Adam was made a quickening *Spirit*—and, "as we have borne the image of the earthly, so must we bear the image of the heavenly;" that is, we must have in us, if we would be converted, the quickening Spirit, which is put into us by God the Holy Ghost. I say again, the spirit has powers which the mind never has. It has the power of communion with Christ, which to a degree is a mental act, but it can no more be performed by man without the spirit, than the act of walking could be performed by man, if he were destitute of a soul to suggest the idea of walking. The Spirit suggests the thoughts of communion which the mind obeys and carries out. Nay, there are times, I think, when the spirit leaves the mind altogether; times when we forget everything of earth, and one almost ceases to think, to reason, to judge, to weigh, or to will. Our souls are like the chariots of Amminadib, drawn swiftly onwards without any powers of volition. We lean upon the breast of Jesus, and in rhapsody divine, and in ecstasy celestial, we enjoy the fruits of the land of the blessed, and pluck the clusters of Eschol before entering into the land of promise.

I think I have clearly put these two points before you. The work of the Spirit consists, first, in awakening powers already possessed by man, but which were asleep and out of order; and in the next place in putting into man powers which he had not before. And to make this simple to the humblest mind, let me suppose man to be something like a machine; all the wheels are out of order, the cogs do not strike upon each other, the wheels do not turn regularly, the rods will not act, the order is gone. Now, the first work of the Spirit is to put these wheels in the right place, to fit the wheels upon the axles, to put the right axle to the right wheel, then to put wheel to wheel, so that they may act upon each other. But that is not all his work. The next thing is to put fire and steam so that these things shall go to work. He does not put fresh wheels, he puts old wheels into order, and then he puts the motive power which is to move the whole. First he puts our mental powers into their proper order and condition, and then he puts a living quickening spirit, so that all these shall move according to the holy will and law of God.

But, mark you, this is not all the Holy Spirit does. For if he were to do this, and then leave us, none of us would get to heaven. If any of you should be so near to heaven that you could hear the angels singing over the walls—if you could almost see within the pearly gates—still, if the Holy Spirit did not help you the last step, you would never enter there. All the work is through his divine operation. Hence it is the Spirit who keeps the wheels in motion, and who takes away that defilement which, naturally engendered by our original sin, falls upon the

machine and puts it out of order. He takes this away, and keeps the machine constantly going without injury, until at last he removes man from the place of defilement to the land of the blessed, a perfect creature, as perfect as he was when he came from the mould of his Maker.

And I must say, before I leave this point, that all the former part of what I have mentioned is done instantaneously. When a man is converted to God, it is done in a moment. Regeneration is an instantaneous work. Conversion to God, the fruit of regeneration, occupies all our life, but regeneration itself is effected in an instant. A man hates God; the Holy Spirit makes him love God. A man is opposed to Christ, he hates his gospel, does not understand it and will not receive it; the Holy Spirit comes, puts light into his darkened understanding, takes the chain from his bondage will, gives liberty to his conscience, gives life to his dead soul, so that the voice of conscience is heard, and the man becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. And all this is done, mark you, by the instantaneous supernatural influence of God the Holy Ghost working as he willeth among the sons of men.

II. Having thus dwelt upon the method of the Holy Spirit's work, I shall now turn to the second point, THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN ORDER TO CONVERSION. In our text we are told that "while Peter spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." Beloved, the Holy Ghost fell on Peter first, or else it would not have fallen on his hearers. There is a necessity that the preacher himself, if we are to have souls saved, should be under the influence of the Spirit. I have constantly made it my prayer that I might be guided by the Spirit even in the smallest and least important parts of the service; for you cannot tell but that the salvation of a soul may depend upon the reading of a hymn, or upon the selection of a chapter. Two persons have joined our church and made a profession of being converted simply through my reading a hymn—

"Jesus, lover of my soul."

They did not remember anything else in the hymn; but those words made such a deep impression upon their mind, that they could not help repeating them for days afterwards, and then the thought arose, "Do I love Jesus?" And then they considered what strange ingratitude it was that he should be the lover of their souls, and yet they should not love him. Now I believe the Holy Spirit led me to read that hymn. And many persons have been converted by some striking saying of the preacher. But why was it the preacher uttered that saying? Simply because he was led thereunto by the Holy Spirit. Rest assured, beloved, that when any part of the sermon is blessed to your heart, the minister said it because he was ordered to say it by his Master. I might preach to-day a sermon which I preached on Friday, and which was useful then, and there might be no good whatever come from it now, because it might not be the sermon which the Holy Ghost would have delivered to-day. But if with sincerity of heart I have sought God's guidance in selecting the topic, and he rests upon me in the preaching of the Word, there is no fear but that it shall be found adapted to your immediate wants. The Holy Spirit must rest upon your preachers. Let them have all the learning of the wisest men, and all the eloquence of such men as Demosthenes and Cicero, still the Word cannot be blessed to you, unless first of all the Spirit of God hath guided the minister's mind in the selection of his subject, and in the discussion of it.

But if Peter himself were under the hand of the Spirit, that would fail unless the Spirit of God, then, did fall upon our hearers; and I shall endeavour now to show the absolute necessity of the Spirit's work in the conversion of men.

Let us remember what kind of thing the work is, and we shall see that other means are altogether out of the question. It is quite certain that men cannot be converted by physical means. The Church of Rome thought that she could convert men by means of armies; so she invaded countries, and threatened them with war and bloodshed unless they would repent and embrace her religion. However, it availed but little, and men were prepared to die rather than leave their faith; she therefore tried those beautiful things—stakes, racks, dungeons, axes, swords, fire; and by these things she hoped to convert men. You have heard of the man who tried to wind up his watch with a pick-axe. That man was extremely wise, compared with the man who thought to touch mind through matter. All the machines you like to invent cannot touch mind. Talk about tying angel's wings with green withes, or manacling the cherubim with iron chains, and then talk about

meddling with the minds of men through physical means. Why, the things don't act; they cannot act. All the king's armies that ever were, and all the warriors clothed with mail, with all their ammunition, could never touch the mind of man. That is an impregnable castle which is not to be reached by physical agency.

Nor, again, can man be converted by moral argument. "Well," says one, "I think he may. Let a minister preach earnestly, and he may persuade men to be converted." Ah! beloved, it is for want of knowing better that you say so. Melancthon thought so, but you know what he said after he tried it—"Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon." So will every preacher find it, if he thinks his arguments can ever convert man. Let me give you a parallel case. Where is the logic that can persuade an Ethiopian to change his skin? By what argument can you induce a leopard to renounce his spots? Even so may he that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well. But if the Ethiopian's skin be changed it must be by a supernatural process; and if the leopard's spots be removed, he that made the leopard must do it. Even so is it with the heart of man. If sin were a thing *ab extra*, and external, we could induce man to change it. For instance, you may induce a man to leave off drunkenness or swearing, because those things are not a part of his nature—he has added that vice to his original depravity. But the hidden evil of the heart is beyond all moral suasion. I dare say a man might have enough argument to induce him to hang himself, but I am certain no argument will ever induce him to hang his sins, to hang his self-righteousness, and to come and humble himself at the foot of the cross; for the religion of Christ is so contrary to all the propensities of man, that it is like swimming against the stream to approach it, for the stream of man's will and man's desire is exactly the opposite of the religion of Jesus Christ. If you wanted a proof of that, at the lifting of my finger, there are thousands in this hall who would rise to prove it; for they would say, "I have found it so, sir, in my experience; I hated religion as much as any man; I despised Christ and his people, and I know not to this day how it is that I am what I am, unless it be the work of God." I have seen the tears run down a man's cheeks when he has come to me in order to be united to the church of Christ, and he has said, "Sir, I wonder how it is I am here to-day; if anyone had told me a year ago that I should think as I now think, and feel as I now feel, I should have called him a born fool for his pains; I used to say I never would be one of those canting Methodists; I liked to spend my Sunday in pleasure, and I did not see why I was to be cooping myself up in the house of God listening to a man talk. I pray, sir? No, not I. I said the best providence in all the world was a good strong pair of hands, and to take care of what you got. If any man talked to me about religion, why I would slam the door in his face, and pretty soon put him out; but the things that I loved then, I now hate, and the things that then I hated now I love, I cannot do or say enough to show how total is the change that has been wrought in me. It must have been the work of God; it could not have been wrought by me, I feel assured; it must be some one greater than myself, who could thus turn my heart." I think these two things are proofs that we want something more than nature, and since physical agency will not do, and mere moral suasion will never accomplish it, that there must be an absolute necessity for the Holy Spirit.

But again, if you will just think a minute what the work is, you will soon see that none but God can accomplish it. In the Holy Scripture, conversion is often spoken of as being a new creation. If you talk about creating yourselves, I should feel obliged if you would create a fly first. Create a gnat, create a grain of sand, and when you have created that, you may talk about creating a new heart. Both are alike, impossible, for creation is the work of God. But still, if you could create a grain of dust, or create even a world, it would not be half the miracle, for you must first find a thing which has created itself. Could that be? Suppose you had no existence, how could you create yourself? Nothing cannot produce anything. Now, how can man re-create himself. A man cannot create himself into a new condition, when he has no being in that condition, but is, as yet, a thing that is not.

Then, again, the work of creation is said to be like the resurrection. "We are alive from the dead." Now, can the dead in the grave raise themselves? Let any minister who thinks he can convert souls, go and raise a corpse; let him go and stand in one of the cemeteries, and bid the tombs open wide their mouths, and make room for those once buried there to awaken, and he will have to preach in vain. But if he could do it, that is not the miracle; it is for the dead

THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

to raise themselves, for an inanimate corpse to kindle in its own breast the spark of life anew. If the work be a resurrection, a creation, does it not strike you that it must be beyond the power of man? It must be wrought in him by no one less than God himself.

And there is yet one more consideration, and I shall have concluded this point. Beloved, even if man could save himself, I would have you recollect how averse he is to it? If we could make our hearers all willing, the battle would be accomplished. "Well," says one, "If I am willing to be saved, can I not be saved?" Assuredly you can, but the difficulty is, we cannot bring men to be willing. That shows, therefore, that there must be a constraint put upon their will. There must be an influence exerted upon them, which they have not in themselves, in order to make them willing in the day of God's power. And this is the glory of the Christian religion. The Christian religion has within its own bowels power to spread itself. We do not ask you to be willing first. We come and tell you the news, and we believe that the Spirit of God working with us, will make you willing. If the progress of the Christian religion depended upon the voluntary assent of mankind, it would never go an inch further, but because the Christian religion has with it an omnipotent influence, constraining men to believe it, it is therefore that it is and must be triumphant, "till like a sea of glory it spreads from shore to shore."

III. Now I shall conclude by bringing one or two thoughts forward, with regard to WHAT MUST BE DONE AT THIS TIME IN ORDER TO BRING DOWN THE HOLY SPIRIT. It is quite certain, beloved, if the Holy Spirit willed to do it, that every man, woman, and child in this place might be converted now. If God, the Sovereign Judge of all, would be pleased now to send out his Spirit, every inhabitant of this million-peopled city might be brought at once to turn unto the living God. Without instrumentality, without the preacher, without books, without anything, God has it in his power to convert men. We have known persons about their business, not thinking about religion at all, who have had a thought injected into their heart, and that thought has been the prolific mother of a thousand meditations; and through these meditations they have been brought to Christ. Without the aid of the minister, the Holy Spirit has thus worked, and to-day he is not restrained. There may be some men, great in infidelity, staunch in opposition to the cross of Christ, but, without asking their consent, the Holy Spirit can pull down the strong man, and make the mighty man bow himself. For when we talk of the Omnipotent God, there is nothing too great for him to do. But, beloved, God has been pleased to put great honour upon instrumentality; he could work without it if he pleased, but he does not do so. However, this is the first thought I want to give you; if you would have the Holy Spirit exert himself in our midst, you must first of all look to him and not to instrumentality. When Jesus Christ preached, there were very few converted under him, and the reason was, because the Holy Spirit was not abundantly poured forth. He had the Holy Spirit without measure himself, but on others the Holy Spirit was not as yet poured out. Jesus Christ said, "Greater works than these shall ye do because I go to my Father, in order to send the Holy Spirit;" and recollect that those few who were converted under Christ's ministry, were not converted by him, but by the Holy Spirit that rested upon him at that time. Jesus of Nazareth was anointed of the Holy Spirit. Now then, if Jesus Christ, the great founder of our religion, needed to be anointed of the Holy Spirit, how much more our ministers? And if God would always make the distinction even between his own Son as an instrument, and the Holy Spirit as the agent, how much more ought we to be careful to do that between poor puny men and the Holy Spirit? Never let us hear you say again, "So many persons were converted by So-and-so." They were not. If converted, they were not converted by man. Instrumentality is to be used, but the Spirit is to have the honour of it. Pay no more a superstitious reverence to man; think no more that God is tied to your plans, and to your agencies. Do not imagine that so many city missionaries, so much good will be done. Do not say, "So many preachers; so many sermons; so many souls saved." Do not say, "So many Bibles, so many tracts; so much good done." Not so; use these, but remember it is not in that proportion the blessing comes; it is, so much Holy Spirit, so many souls in-gathered.

And now another thought. If we would have the Spirit, beloved, we must each of us try to honour him. There are some chapels into which if you were to enter, you would never know there was a Holy Spirit. Mary Magdalen said of old, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him," and the

Christian might often say so, for there is nothing said about the Lord until they come to the end, and then there is just the benediction, or else you would not know that there were three persons in one God at all. Until our churches honour the Holy Spirit, we shall never see it abundantly manifested in our midst. Let the preacher always confess before he preaches that he relies upon the Holy Spirit. Let him burn his manuscript and depend upon the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit does not come to help him, let him be still and let the people go home and pray that the Spirit will help him next Sunday.

And do you also, in the use of all your agencies, always honour the Spirit? We often begin our religious meetings without prayer; it is all wrong. We must honour the Spirit; unless we put him first, he will never make crowns for us to wear. He will get victories, but he will have the honour of them, and if we do not give to him the honour, he will never give to us the privilege and success. And best of all, if you would have the Holy Spirit, let us meet together earnestly to pray for him. Remember, the Holy Spirit will not come to us as a church, unless we seek him. "For this thing will I be enquired of all the house of Israel to do it for them." We purpose during the coming week to hold meetings of special prayer, to supplicate for a revival of religion. On the Friday morning I opened the first prayer meeting at Trinity Chapel, Brixton; and, I think, at seven o'clock, we had as many as two hundred and fifty persons gathered together. It was a pleasant sight. During the hour, nine brethren prayed, one after the other; and I am sure there was the spirit of prayer there. Some persons present sent up their names, asking that we would offer special petitions for them; and I doubt not the prayers will be answered. At Park Street, on Monday morning, we shall have a prayer-meeting from eight to nine; then during the rest of the week there will be a prayer-meeting in the morning from seven to eight. On Monday evening we shall have the usual prayer-meeting at seven, when I hope there will be a large number attending. I find that my brother, Baptist Noel, has commenced morning and evening prayer-meetings, and they have done the same thing in Norwich and many provincial towns, where, without any pressure, the people are found willing to come. I certainly did not expect to see so many as two hundred and fifty persons at an early hour in the morning meet together for prayer. I believe it was a good sign. The Lord hath put prayer into their hearts and therefore they were willing to come, "Prove me now here, saith the Lord of hosts, and see if I do not pour you out a blessing so that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Let us meet and pray, and if God doth not hear us, it will be the first time he has broken his promise. Come, let us go up to the sanctuary; let us meet together in the house of the Lord, and offer solemn supplication; and I say again, if the Lord doth not make bare his arm in the sight of all the people, it will be the reverse of all his previous actions, it will be the contrary of all his promises, and contradictory to himself. We have only to try him, and the result is certain. In dependance on his Spirit, if we only meet for prayer, the Lord shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him. O Lord, lift up thyself because of thine enemies; pluck thy right hand out of thy bosom, O Lord our God, for Christ's sake, Amen.

“FOR IT IS THE BLOOD THAT MAKETH
AN ATONEMENT FOR THE SOUL.”

An Open-Air Service

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LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, JUNE 20, 1858.

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“FOR IT IS THE BLOOD THAT MAKETH AN ATONEMENT FOR THE SOUL.”

THE worship of God was commenced by singing the following psalm:—

(TUNE—*Old Hundredth.*)

PSALM C.

“All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
Him serve with fear, his praise forth tell,
Come ye before him and rejoice.”

A short prayer was then offered up, that the life-giving power of the Holy Ghost might enable the preacher so to speak, and the hearers so to receive, the Word of God, that each might be blessed for the sake of Jesus Christ. Several of the congregation joined in the Lord's prayer; after which the attention of those gathered together was directed to

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS, XVII. 10, 11.

“And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood, I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people.

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

The last clause of the quotation was selected as the text.

“For it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

There are three words in this text which will guide you to lift out (as from a mine) truth which is in the Word of God. Open the Bible and you will find that the soul is addressed, that atonement is its subject, and that that atonement is blood—blood expressed, or implied.

To these three words I now direct your attention.

I.—*The Soul.*

II.—*Atonement.*

III.—*Blood.*

First, then, let me speak of the SOUL.

“For it is the blood that maketh an atonement for *the soul*.” And what is that? What is man without a soul? Let us go back to the time when man was not, but there was the image—there was a piece of dead clay, standing erect it might be, but only

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like a stone upon the earth. But when God breathed into that lifeless dust, then man became a living soul—an image like unto God himself. A spark of immortality was breathed into the dead clay, and man became a living soul. If it is the blood which maketh atonement for the soul, we deal not with the body as a body only, but simply as the shell which contains the immortal part of man. It is the real being which God deals with in His Word; it is the real man—that which is, that which was, and that which shall be. Yes, it is that part of man which can go back to childhood; which can trace the progress of his life step by step, which he has passed, and is that which can now stand and elevate itself above the beasts of the field; it is the real man. Where is the hair, for instance, that has passed from our heads? Where is the flesh, the bodily substance, that has passed away? Yet the soul is still the same while the body is changed. When we are told that blood is the atonement for *the soul*, it is that which has been ever since we had a being; it is that which constitutes the man. It is not the hand, it is not the foot, it is not the head: it is the immortal part—the real being which is within. Shall I treat my body, or any portion of it, as the man? No! I say, give me that which is adapted to feed my soul, even at the expense of distress to my body. And why? It is that which shall be. It is that which can stand here and look to the time when this body, now animate, shall lie down inanimate, as our original father was, before he had a soul. The body shall return to the dust, but the spirit shall not die; it shall return to the God who gave it. We are dealing, my dear fellow-sinners, with the real being, when we speak on the subject of the soul; that which looks at to-morrow; that which can grapple with next Sabbath-day; that which can stand at the grave of the relative, and with confidence commit the dead body to the ground, still realizing the living existence of the spirit which once inhabited that body. For, remember, St. Paul, in the Hebrews, represents the Christian's race as one which is run upon a course which is walled up on either side by men like Enoch, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Daniel, and other of the spirits of just men made perfect. All these are represented as looking on at the race that you and I, my friends, are running, or I hope shall run in this life. For God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. The immortal soul is that which is, and which shall be; that which baffles death, and defies the grave; that which Satan cannot destroy; that which God says shall never die. Jesus put this matter into a very simple proposition, when he inquired, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Gain the whole world for time, but lose his soul for all eternity. Yes, it is that part of us which is now, and which shall be in existence, ready and waiting for that great day when Jesus shall come to judge the quick and the dead. Then shall the spirits, which have been separated from their respective bodies, again re-animate those bodies, again inhabit this earthly house of our tabernacle. For then this corruption shall put on incorruption; this mortal shall put on immortality. The body shall change, but there will be no change in the soul; that is the never-dying part of man, of which the text says "it is the blood that maketh atonement for *the soul*."

When we look at man as having an immortal and indestructible soul, the responsibility of Christ's minister is aroused: when a man feels that he has something within him which others enjoy not, then is the time that a spiritually-minded man who knows that, if we die in sin, we shall inevitably suffer to all eternity, experiences, "Yea, woe is

me if I preach not the gospel." It is with this view of the soul, not so much for time, but far more for eternity that we preach here, looking forward to the fearful time when the immortal soul shall be introduced into its eternal rest or eternal condemnation: it is the soul, which is redeemed with blood, it is more especially the real part of man that we deal with in thus speaking.

Have *you* a soul? It is no use our simply referring the matter to Adam and Eve, if we cannot bring it down to ourselves. The human heart, which is "deceitful above all things," is anxious to get rid of "creation," and of the "fall," and to put them on Adam and Eve. But have *you* a soul? Did you feel, when your friend died, that he was exterminated? Did you even think, when standing by a death-bed, that the soul was dead? No. Shall we see our friends on a sick-bed with the mind as active, the soul as happy, and the memory as strong as ever, and believe that the last breath which goes out of that body shall destroy that which years of sickness have not been able to weaken, but rather tended to make it stronger? No! The body certainly is taken to the dust, but the spirit still lives. "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for *the soul*."

II. ATONEMENT.

What *mean* we by this term? Go to any of our prisons, and you will there find out what atonement means. You will there discover that there is an English law, and that those who have broken it have been compelled to make an atonement for breaking it; and this must be remembered, that there is not a man who, when he is hanged for murder, atones for that murder, except in the sight of man whose law he has broken. Having committed murder, and the law in this country being that a man who takes the life of another shall pay it by his own life, he is hanged, and thus he pays the penalty of the law of his country. But he does not thereby pay the penalty of the law of God. No; he has only sinned against man for the time being—against man as such—and it is only in that sense that he has to atone and pay the penalty of the law. You have no right to charge a man with being a thief after he has redeemed his character in the eyes of the law by undergoing the penalty inflicted. He then holds exactly the position he held before the offence was committed, and he cannot be again condemned for the offence for which he was sent to prison and for which he has suffered the sentence of the law. Apply this to the word of God, and what is atonement? It is the price paid for breaking the law, and when that price is paid, the sinner stands in the eyes of the law, as if he had not broken it at all. Atonement is that which is required on account of the breaking of the law, and when that atonement is presented to the Being whose law is broken, the man is re-introduced into the position which he held before the law was broken. Adam and Eve had a law; there was the tree of life, and another tree which was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When God made man and woman, he planted these two trees in the garden, concerning one of which he said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." But they brake God's law, and subjected themselves to the penalty of *death*. And if, my friends, you do not like the idea of having broken the law *in them*, look into your own hearts and souls. Have you kept all God's laws? Can you go to the Ten Commandments and say that you have done your duty to your God, yourself, and to your neighbour? We will not go to Paradise, but we will stand here and examine our own hearts. Have our hands stolen?

Have our tongues lied? Have not each of our souls prompted our eyes, our hands, and our feet, and our whole body to run in the ways of sin? May we not say, with the Prophet, "Our whole head is sick, and our hearts faint; from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, we are full of bruises and putrifying sores?" Yes, my brethren, let us be honest with ourselves; for it is with the lost, the depraved, and the fallen, that the minister of Christ has to deal. These are the persons to whom this verse appeals; "for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Let us not, therefore, lay it on our hands, or our heads, or our feet; for if you will go to the New River, one of the great sources of the water supply of this metropolis, and fill it up with ink, ink will be communicated to every one of your houses, by the means by which water is at present supplied. So it is with the human heart. Its wickedness is exhibited by means of the various members of the body; it is displayed in a man's lusts, his thoughts, his words, and his deeds. It all comes from the internal source—the heart; the soul moves the whole, and atonement is required, which you cannot give. You cannot go now into the presence of God, with all your sins of word and deed, since you were cradled in your mother's lap! Which of you dare go now into the presence of the Deity, and say, "Here am I?" Nay, would you not rather place your mouths in the dust, and cry, "Guilty! guilty," before God? Would you not say, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings; with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" Shall I give my first-born for my transgression; the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" No! this is not required. "We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Atonement is necessary, because we have broken God's law. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." We have sinned; and we must pay the penalty of that sin—DEATH.

This, my friends, is a fearful view of things, but it is a God-inspiring view of things, and humbling to self. It is the case, and it has been the case ever since the fall. God in His wisdom has treated man as fallen and requiring an atonement, and that atonement must be made by death, and nothing short of it; and unless you and I can give God "death" for our sins, we shall never enter heaven; but we shall descend to hell, the place prepared for the devil and his angels! Atonement required of God is *death*. Then let us consider—

III.—Blood.

"For it is the *blood* which maketh atonement for the soul." And now, my friends, I come to a subject which has long interested my heart, because I never found peace with God till I found *blood*. I remember once preaching at the Obelisk, on the other side of the water, and after addressing a large number of people, one of the men rejected the Bible, as he said, "If you open the Bible anywhere, you will find nothing but *blood! blood!! blood!!!*" Yes! when the Spirit of God enters that man's heart, and he is born again, he will then know the spirit of that of which he then only knew the letter. May God lay hold on that man! He was right; for the Scripture is made up of this word, *blood! blood! blood!*

This subject may be illustrated, in a threefold aspect, by a tree, of which there are—
1. Roots; 2. Trunk; 3. Branches. The tree represents the whole Word of God, which may be divided into three parts. It has—1. Patriarchal Roots; 2. A Judaical Trunk;

and, 3. Christian Branches. Whichever you examine—roots, or trunk, or branches—you will find one sap, one life-giving power pervading the whole—BLOOD. If you examine the patriarchal system, you will find blood in the root; if you examine the Judaical system, you will find blood in the trunk; and if you examine the various branches of New Testament Scriptures, you will find there the *blood*, which is the life. It is not the letter, it is the spirit which giveth life; it is the BLOOD of Jesus which washes away our sins.

Let us take these three points as they are given in the Bible: Cain and Abel were patriarchs—members of the first human family. Each offered a sacrifice. Cain brought of the first fruits of the earth, for he was a tiller of the ground; Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock, for he was a shepherd; and we are told that God had respect to Abel, and to his offering, but to Cain's he had not respect. No; his was not a *bloody* sacrifice; and it was the *bloody* sacrifice which the Lord accepted; for we are told, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." We find, therefore, in the patriarchal acceptance with God, that the atonement of Abel was a sacrifice of *blood*.

Secondly. There is the Jewish view of true religion made known in the Word of God. And now we pass from the roots to the trunk; they are not different religions; the tree, to give forth branches, must have roots, and must have a trunk. The Word of God did not introduce a new religion; it was only a growing out of the old root; we find the Jewish religion brings the subject of *sacrifice* more and more clearly before our view. There we find a morning and evening sacrifice; there was a lamb there which was the sacrifice, for a sin offering; the atonement was by BLOOD; and the great day of atonement was the only day the High Priest was allowed to enter within the veil, and he dare not go in without *blood*—*blood* for himself, *blood* for the people. And on the day of the great atonement, when our Saviour died upon the cross, that veil which had never been set aside without *blood*, was when Jesus gave up the ghost, "rent from the top to the bottom." So truly was it that the Jewish religion centered in *blood*, and that the Jewish religion being simply the trunk of the tree, introduced us to a new order of things—Jesus "the BRANCH," which was spoken of by Isaiah, Zechariah, and many other prophets.

Thirdly. Blood is the centre of the Christian religion. "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Jesus lived holily and godlily in the world; he lived for the benefit of others; he *died* in their behalf; and His *blood* cleanseth from all sin. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The centre of St. Paul's teaching was the *blood* of Christ following the *blood* of the Jewish and patriarchal dispensations. "Christ and Him Crucified,"—that is, "Christ and Christ Crucified."

You may have heard of Jesus, but have you heard of the *blood*? You may have heard of Jesus, but have you been to the *fountain*—which is open for sin and for uncleanness? Have you heard of the invitation that "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Have you heard of this cleansing power which the blood of Christ possesses? In the day you see Christ pouring out his soul unto *death* for your soul, ye are His; for He says, "Look unto me and be ye saved." Plead the death of Jesus with God, for that is what God requires. In Him you will find peace. In Him you will find that which you require—death, atonement, and immortality. "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Is there a converted character who knows nothing of the blood of Christ? A man may be re-

pentant and say, "I will arise, and go to my Father," but this is not salvation: it is the man who can say, "I know in whom I have BELIEVED;" "I have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The man who knows that Jesus died for *him*—that he now pleads in the holiest of the holies for him; that man who sees his sins nailed to the cross of Jesus. God grant that you may, by the blessings of His Holy Spirit, *see* that it is by the blood of Christ that you can be cleansed!

In conclusion, I would indeed exhort you to watch and pray; to be conformed to Jesus, who has done so much for you. Will you hear of his living and dying, and still go to the grave without this atonement? When His word is put into your hands, will you still cast it aside? When he knocks, will you still keep the door shut? When the fountain is opened in Jerusalem, and flows to the various nations of the earth, and has forced its way now to the steps of the Royal Exchange, will you allow the cross of our Redeemer to be erected here, and yet not exclaim, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief?" The whole atonement spoken of in the Word of God, is centred in Him. Eternal life is centred in Him. "I am the door," He says, "and no man cometh to the Father, but by me." "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

Then when you and I have passed, it may be, but a short time in the grave, should we arrive in heaven, the theme will still be "blood." Yes, my friends, read the fifth chapter of the book of Revelation, and you will find that those who are around the throne of God give praise unto the Lamb who redeemed them to God by his precious *blood*. Read also the seventh chapter of Revelation, and you will find that those who are in heaven are dressed in white. And who are they? Those who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in *the blood* of the Lamb. Our Saviour is represented as differing from them, as His vesture is "*dipped in blood*." He is alone in this. The whole Church is arrayed in white, while the Saviour's robes are red with blood—dyed garments from Bozrah; blood that cleanseth from all sin. When you reach heaven, you will still continue your song of praise, commenced on earth—

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head."

Should you arrive in heaven, you will find that it is not for your own good works that God has saved you, but because Christ has died and made the atonement required by God, and you have believed to the saving of your souls. Brethren, "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." And now to God the Father, &c.

The following hymn was then sung.

(TUNE—*Rousseau's Dream*.)

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side which flow'd,
Be of sin the double care,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

The service was closed with a short prayer and the blessing.

It was announced that these services would be repeated (D.V.) every Sunday afternoon, at half-past five o'clock, until further notice.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 27, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."—
Acts xxvi. 14.

How marvellous the condescension which induced the Saviour to take notice of such a wretch as Saul! Enthroned in the highest heavens, amidst the eternal melodies of the redeemed, and the seraphic sonnets of the cherubim and all the angelic hosts, it was strange that the Saviour should stoop himself from his dignity to speak to a persecutor. Engaged as he is both day and night in pleading the cause of his own church before his Father's throne, it is condescension indeed which could induce him, as it were, to suspend his intercessions, in order that he might speak personally to one who had sworn himself his enemy. And what grace was it that could lead the Saviour's heart to speak to such a man as Saul, who had *breathed out* threatenings against his church? Had he not haled men and women to prison; had he not compelled them in every synagogue to blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ? and now Jesus himself must interpose to bring him to his senses! Ah, had it been a thunderbolt which quivered in its haste to reach the heart of man, we should not have marvelled, or had the lips of the Saviour been heaving with a curse we should not have been astonished. Had he not himself in his own lifetime cursed the persecutor? Did he not say, whosoever shall offend one of the least of these my little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast in the sea? But now the man that is cursed by that language, is yet to be blessed by him whom he had persecuted; who though he had stained his hand in blood, and had now the commission in his hands to drag others to prison, though he had kept the clothes of those who had stoned Stephen, yet the Master, the King of heaven, must himself speak from the upper skies to bring him to feel the need of a Saviour, and to make him partaker of precious faith. I say this is marvellous condescension and matchless grace. But, beloved, when we come to recollect the Saviour's character, it is but little wonderful that he should do this for he has done far more than this. Did he not in person leave the starry thrones of heaven, and come down to earth to suffer, and bleed, and die? But when I think of Bethlehem's manger, of the cruel garden of Gethsemane, and the yet more shameful Calvary, I do not wonder that the Saviour should do any act of grace or condescension. That being done, what can be greater? If he hath stooped from heaven into hades, what greater stoop can he accomplish? If his own throne must be left empty, if his own crown must be relinquished, if his Godhead must be veiled in flesh, and the splendours of his deity clothed in the rags of manhood, what wonder, I say, that he should stoop to speak even to Saul of Tarsus, to bring his heart to himself? Beloved, some of us do not wonder either, for although we have not had greater grace than the apostle himself we have had no less. The Saviour did not speak out of heaven to us with a voice that others might hear, but he spoke with a voice that our conscience heard. We were not blood-thirsty, it may be, against his children, but we had sins both black and heinous; yet he stopped us. Not content with wooing us or with threatening us, not content with sending his ministers to us and giving us his word to warn us of duty, he would come himself.

No. 202.

Penny Pulpit, No. 2,961.

And you and I, beloved, who have tasted of this grace, can say it was matchless love that saved Paul, but not love unexampled; for he hath saved us also, and made us partakers of the same grace.

I intend, this morning, to address myself more particularly to those who *fear not* the Lord Jesus Christ, but on the contrary, oppose him. I think I may be quite certain that I have none here who go the length of desiring to see the old persecution of the church revived. I do not think there is an Englishman, however much he may hate religion, who would wish to see the stake again in Smithfield, and the burning pile consuming the saints. There may be some who hate them as much, but still not in that fashion; the common sense of the age reviles against the gibbet, the sword, and the dungeon. The children of God, in this country at least, are quite safe from any political persecution of that kind; but it is highly probable that I have here this morning some who go to the full length of their tether, and who endeavour as much as lieth in them to provoke the Lord to anger by opposing his cause. You will perhaps recognise yourselves if I try to paint a picture. It is seldom that you ever go into the house of God, in fact you have a contempt for all the gatherings of the righteous; you have a notion that all saints are hypocrites, that all professors are canters, and you do not at times blush to say so. However, you have a wife, and that wife of yours has been impressed under the sound of the ministry; she loves to go to the house of God, and heaven and her heart alone know what grief and agony of mind you have caused her. How often have you taunted and jeered her on account of her profession! You cannot deny but that she is a better woman for it; you are obliged to confess that although she cannot go with you in all your sports and merriments, yet as far as she can go she is a loving and affectionate wife to you. If any one should find fault with her, you would right manfully defend her character; but it is her religion that you hate; and it is but lately that you threatened to lock her up on Sunday. You say it is impossible for you to live in the house with her if she will go up to the house of God. Moreover there is a little child of yours; you had no objection to that child going to the Sunday-school, because she was out of your way on the Sunday when you were smoking your pipe in your shirt sleeves; you did not want to be bothered with your children, you said, and therefore you were glad to pack them off to the Sunday-school; but that child has had her heart touched; and you cannot help seeing that the religion of Christ is in her heart, therefore you do not like it; you love the child, but you would give anything if she were not what she is; you would give anything if you could crush the last spark of religion out of her. But perhaps I can put your case yet. You are a master; you occupy a respectable position, you have many men under you, you cannot bear a man to make a profession of religion. Other masters you know have said to their men, "Do as you like, so long as you are a good servant, I do not care about your religious views." But mayhap you are a little the reverse; although you would not turn a man away because of his religion, you give him a jeer every now and then, and if you trip him up in a little fault, you say, "Ah! that is your religion, I suppose you learned that at chapel;" grieving the poor man's soul, while he endeavours as far as he can to discharge his duty to you. Or, you are a young man, employed in a warehouse or a shop, and there is one of your shopmates who has lately taken to religion; he is to be found on his knees in prayer—what fine fun you have made of him lately, haven't you? You and others have joined in like a pack of hounds after a poor hare, and he being of rather a timid turn of mind, perhaps is silent before you, or if he speaks, the tear is in his eye, because you have wounded his spirit. Now this is the selfsame spirit that kindled the firebrand of old; that stretched the saint upon the rack; that cut his body in pieces, and sent him to wander about in sheep skins and in goat skins. If I have not exactly hit your character yet, I may do it before I have done. I wish to address myself especially to those of you, who in word or deed or in any other manner, persecute the children of God; or if you do not like so hard a word as "persecute," laugh at them, opposing them, and endeavour to put an end to the good work in their hearts.

I shall in the name of Christ, first *put the question to you*, "*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*" In the second place, I shall in Christ's name *expostulate with you*, "*It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks;*" and then if God shall bless what is said to the teaching of your heart, it may be that the Master shall give you a few words of comfort, as he did the apostle Paul, when he said, "Rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a

minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee."

I. In the first place, then, we will consider THE QUESTION, WHICH JESUS CHRIST PUT OUT OF HEAVEN TO PAUL, has been put to you this morning.

First, notice what a personal question it was, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" When I preach to you, I am obliged to address you all as an assembly; it is not possible for me, except on rare occasions, to single out an individual, and describe his character, although under the hand of the Spirit it is sometimes done; but in the main I am obliged to describe the character as a whole, and deal with it in the mass. But not so our Master; he did not say out of heaven, "Saul, why does the synagogue persecute me? Why do the Jews hate my religion?" No; it was put more pertinently than that—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" If it had been put in general terms, it would have glanced off from the heart of the apostle; it would have been like an arrow which had missed the mark, and barely grazed the skin of the man in whose heart it was intended to find a home; but when it came personally—"Why persecutest thou me?"—there was no getting off it. I pray the Lord to make the question personal to some of you. There be many of us here present who have had personal preaching to our souls. Do you not remember, dear brother in Christ, when you were first pricked in the heart, how personal the preacher was? I remember it well. It seemed to me that I was the only person in the whole place, as if a black wall were round about me, and I were shut in with the preacher, something like the prisoners at the Penitentiary, who each sit in their box and can see no one but the chaplain. I thought all he said was meant for me; I felt persuaded that some one knew my character, and had written to him and told him all, and that he had personally picked me out. Why, I thought he fixed his eyes on me; and I have reason to believe he did, but still he said he knew nothing about my case. Oh, that men would hear the word preached, and that God would so bless them in their hearing, that they might feel it to have a personal application to their own hearts.

But note again—the Apostle received some information as to the persecuted one. If you had asked Saul who it was he persecuted, he would have said, "Some poor fishermen, that had been setting up an impostor; I am determined to put them down. Why, who are they? They are the poorest of the world; the very scum and dross of society; if they were princes and kings we perhaps might let them have their opinion; but these poor miserable ignorant fellows, I do not see why they are to be allowed to carry out their infatuation, and I shall persecute them. Moreover, most of them are women I have been persecuting—poor ignorant creatures. What right have they to set their judgment up above the priests? They have no right to have an opinion of their own, and therefore it is quite right for me to make them turn away from their foolish errors." But see in what a different light Jesus Christ puts it. He does not say, "Saul, Saul, why didst thou persecute Stephen?" or "Why art thou about to drag the people of Damascus to prison?" No—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Did you ever think of it in that light? You have got a poor man who works for you, who wears a fustian jacket. He is nobody. You may laugh at him. He will not tell anybody, or even if he does, you will not be called to book about it, because he is nobody. You dare not laugh so at a duke or an earl. You would mind your behaviour if you were in such company as that; but because this is a poor man, you think you have a license given you to laugh at his religion. But remember, that beneath the fustian jacket there is Jesus Christ himself. Inasmuch as you have done this unto one of the least of his brethren, you have done it unto him. Has the thought ever struck you, that when you laughed you were laughing, not at him, but at his Master? Whether it struck you or not, it is a great truth, that Jesus Christ takes all the injuries which are done to his people as if they had been done to him. You locked your wife out the other night, did you, because she would frequent the house of God? When she stood there shivering in the midnight air, or entreating you to let her in, if your eyes had been wide open, you would have seen the Lord of life and glory shivering there, and he might have said to you, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And then you would have seen it to have been a very much greater sin than you imagine it now to be. You laughed at a little child the other day, because the child sang its simple hymn, and evidently sang it from its heart. Did you know,—or if you did not know it then, know it now,—did you know that you were laughing at Christ; that when you mocked her you were mocking her Master, and that Jesus Christ has set down

that laugh in his great book, as an indignation done to his own real person. "Why persecutest thou me?" If ye could see Christ enthroned in heaven, reigning there in the splendours of his majesty, would ye laugh at him? If ye could see him sitting on his great throne coming to judge the world, would ye laugh at him? Oh! as all the rivers run into the sea, so all the streams of the churches suffering run into Christ. If the clouds be full of rain they empty themselves upon the earth; and if the Christian's heart be full of woes it empties itself into the breast of Jesus. Jesus is the great reservoir of all his people's woes, and by laughing at his people you help to fill that reservoir to its brim; and one day will it burst in the fury of its might and the floods shall sweep you away, and the sand foundation upon which your house is builded shall give way, and then what shall ye do when ye shall stand before the face of him whose person ye have mocked and whose name ye have despised?

We will put the question in another way; it is a very reasonable one, and seems to demand an answer. "Saul, Saul, *why* persecutest thou me?" "Saul," the Master might have said, "what have I done to hurt thee? When I was on earth did I say a word against thy character—did I damage thy reputation—did I injure thy person—did I ever grieve thee—did I ever say a hard word against thee? What hurt have I ever done thee? Why art thou so provoked against me? If I had been thy bitterest enemy, and had spit in thy face, thou couldest not have been more wroth with me than now. But why, man, wilt thou be angry against one who has never hurt thee—who has never done thee a displeasure? Oh! *why* persecutest thou me? Is there anything in my character that deserves it? Was I not pure, and holy, and separate from sinners? Did I not go about doing good? I raised the dead; I healed the lepers; I fed the hungry; I clothed the naked; for which of these works dost thou hate me? Why persecutest thou me?" The question comes home to you in the same manner this morning. Ah! man, why dost thou persecute Christ? He puts it to thee. What hurt has he ever done thee? Has Christ ever despoiled you, robbed you, injured you in any way whatever? Has his gospel in any way whatever taken away the comforts of life from you, or done you any damage? You dare not say that. If it were the Mormonism of Joe Smith, I wonder not that you should persecute it, though, even then, you would have no right to do so, for that might take the wife of your bosom from you. If it were a filthy and lustful system that would undermine the foundations of society, you might think yourself right in persecuting it. But has Christ ever taught his disciples to rob you, to cheat you, to curse you? Does not his doctrine teach the very reverse, and are not his followers, when they are true to their Master and themselves, the very reverse of this? Why hate a man who has done you no injury? Why hate a religion that does not interfere with you? If you will not follow Christ yourself, how does it injure you to let others do so? You say it injures your family; prove it, sir. Has it injured your wife? Does she love you less than before? Is she less obedient? You dare not say that. Has it hurt your child? Is your child less reverent to his father because he fears God? Is he less fond of you because he loves his Redeemer best of all? In what respect has Christ ever hurt any of you? He has fed you with the bounties of his providence. The clothes you wear to-day are the gifts of his bounty. The breath in your nostrils he has preserved to you, and will you curse him for this? It was but the other day that an avenging angel seized the axe, and the Master said, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" And Jesus came and put his hand upon the angel's arm, and said, "Stay, stay yet another year until I have digged about it and dunged it." Your life was spared by him, and you curse him for this; you blaspheme him because he has spared your life, and spend the breath which his own grace has given you, in cursing the God that allows you to breathe. You little know from how many dangers Christ in his providence protects you. You can little guess how numerous the mercies which, unseen by you, are poured into your lap every hour. And yet, for mercies innumerable, for grace that cannot be stopped by your iniquity, for love that cannot be overpowered by your injuries, do you curse the Saviour for all this? Base ingratitude! Truly, ye have hated him without a cause; ye have persecuted him, though he has loved you, and has done nought to injure you.

But let me picture the Master to you once more, and methinks you will never, never persecute him again, if you do but see him. Oh, if you could but see the Lord Jesus, you must love him; if you did but know his worth you could not hate him! He was more beautiful than all the sons of men. Persuasion sat upon his

lips, as if all the bees of eloquence had brought their honey there, and made his mouth the hive. He spake—and so did he speak, that if a lion had heard him, it would have crouched and licked his feet. Oh, how loving was he in his tenderness! Remember that prayer of his when the iron was piercing his hand—"Father, forgive them." You never heard him, all his life long, once saying an angry word to those who persecuted him. He was reviled, but he reviled not again. Even when he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, he was dumb before his shearers, and he opened not his mouth. But though fairer than the sons of men, both in person and in character, yet he was the Man of Sorrows. Grief had ploughed his brow with her deepest furrows. His cheeks were sunken and hollow with agony. He had fasted many a day, and often had he thirsted. He toiled from morning to night; then spent all night in prayer; then rose again to labour—and all this without reward—with no hope of getting anything from any man. He had no house, no home, no gold, no silver. Foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but he, the Son of Man, had not where to lay his head. He was the persecuted man, hunted by his enemies from place to place, with scarce a friend to help him. Oh, had ye seen him; had ye seen his loveliness and his misery united, had ye seen his kindness, and yet the cruelty of his enemies, your hearts must have melted—you would have said, "No, Jesus, I cannot persecute thee! No, I will stand between thee and the burning sunshine. If I cannot be thy disciple, yet at any rate I will not be thy opposer. If this cloak can shelter thee in thy midnight wrestlings, there it is; and if this waterpot can draw thee water from the well, I will let it down, and thou shalt have enough; for if I love thee not, since thou art so poor, so sad, and so good, I cannot hate thee. No, I will not persecute thee!" But though I feel certain, if you could see Christ, you must say this, yet have you really persecuted him in his disciples, in the members of his spiritual body, and I therefore put to you the question, "Saul, Saul, *why* persecutest thou me?" God help you to answer that question, and the answer must be shame and confusion of face.

II. This shall bring me to the second point—EXPOSTULATION. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." There is a figure here; there is an allusion to the ox goad. When the ox was yoked for ploughing, if he did not move on in as sprightly a manner as was desired, the husbandman pricked him with a long rod that ended with an iron point. Very likely, as soon as the ox felt the goad, instead of going on, he struck out as hard as he could behind him. He kicked against the goad, sending the iron deep into his own flesh. Of course the husbandman who was guiding him kept his goad there still, and the more frequently the ox kicked, the more he was hurt. But go he must. He was in the hand of man, who must and will rule the beast. It was just his own option to kick as long as he pleased, for he did no harm to his driver, but only to himself. You will see that there is a beauty in this figure, if I pull it to pieces, and ask you a question or two.

It is hard for you to kick against the goad; for, in the first place, you do not really accomplish your purpose. When the ox kicks against the goad, it is to spite the husbandman for having goaded him onward; but instead of hurting the husbandman it hurts itself. And when you have persecuted Christ in order to stop the progress of his gospel, let me ask you, have you ever stopped it at all? No; and ten thousand like you would not be able to stop the mighty onward rush of the host of God's elect. If thou thinkest, O man, that thou canst stop the progress of Christ's church, go thou and first bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and bid the universe stand still instead of circling round those fair stars! Go, stand by the winds, and bid them cease their wailing, or take thy station upon a hoary cliff, and bid the roaring sea roll back when its tide is marching on the beach; and when thou hast stopped the universe, when sun, moon, and stars have been obedient to thy mandate, when the sea hath heard thee and obeyed thee, then come forth and stop the omnipotent progress of the church of Christ. But thou canst not do it. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." But what said the Almighty? He did not even get up to combat with them. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." The church cares not for all the noise of the world. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the

sea; Though the waters thereof roar, and be troubled, and though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Ah, in your hosts ye have not prevailed, and think ye, O puny man, that one by one, ye shall be able to conquer? Your wish may be strong enough, but your wish can never be accomplished. You may desire it anxiously, but you shall never attain thereto.

But put it as a personal matter, have you ever succeeded in stopping the work of grace in the heart of any one? You tried to laugh it out of your wife, but if she really was converted, you never would laugh it out of her. You may have tried to vex your little child; but if grace be in that child, I defy you and your master the devil to get it out. Ay, young man, you may laugh at your shopmate, but he will beat you in the long run. He may sometimes be abashed, but you never will turn him. If he is a hypocrite you will, and perhaps there will be no great loss; but if he be a true soldier of Christ, he can bear a great deal more than the laugh of an empty-headed being like yourself. You need not for a moment flatter yourself that he will be afraid of you. He will have to endure a greater baptism of suffering than that, and he will not be cowed by the first shower of your poor, pitiful, malicious folly. And as for you, sir merchant, you may persecute your man, but see if you will get him to yield. Why, I know a man whose master had tried very hard to make him go against his conscience; but he said, "No, sir." And the master thought, "Well, he is a very valuable servant; but I will beat him if I can." So he threatened that if he did not do as he wished he would turn him away. The man was dependent on his master, and he knew not what he should do for his daily bread. So he said to his master honestly at once, "Sir, I don't know of any other situation; I should be very sorry to leave you, for I have been very comfortable, but if it comes to that, sir, I would sooner starve than submit my conscience to any one." The man left, and the master had to go after him to bring him back again. And so it will be in every case. If Christians are but faithful, they must win the day. It is no use your kicking against them; you cannot hurt them. They must, they shall be conquerors through him that hath loved them.

But there is another way of putting it. When the ox kicked against the goad, he got no good by it. Kick as he might, he was never benefited by it. If the ox had stopped and nibbled a blade of grass or a piece of hay, why, then he would have been wise, perhaps, in standing still; but to stand still simply to be goaded and to kick, simply to have iron stuck into your flesh, is a rather foolish thing. Now, I ask you, what have you ever got by opposing Christ? Suppose you say you don't like religion, what have you ever got by hating it? I will tell you what you have got. You have got those red eyes sometimes on the Monday morning, after the drunkenness of the Sunday night. I will tell you what you have got, young man. You have got that shattered constitution, which, even if you had now turned it to the paths of virtue, must hang about you till you leave it in your grave. What have you got? Why, there are some of you who might have been respectable members of society, who have got that old broken hat, that old ragged coat, that drunken, slouched manner about you, and that character that you would like to let down and run away from, for it is no good to you. That is what you have got by opposing Christ. What have you got by opposing him? Why, a house without furniture—for through your drunkenness you have had to sell everything of value you had. You have got your children in rags, and your wife in misery, and your eldest daughter, perhaps, running into shame, and your son rising up to curse the Saviour, as you yourself have done. What have you got by opposing Christ! What man in all the world ever got anything by it? There is a serious loss sustained, but as for gain, there is nothing of the sort.

But you say, though you have opposed Christ, still you are moral. Again I will put it to you—Have you ever got anything even then by opposing Christ? Has it made your family any the happier, do you think? Has it made you any the happier yourself? Do you feel after you have been laughing at your wife, or your child, or your man, that you can sleep any the sounder? Do you feel that to be a thing which will quiet your conscience when you come to die? Remember, you must die; and do you think that when you are dying, it will afford you any consolation to think that you did your best to destroy the souls of other people? No, you must confess it is a poor game. You are getting no good by it, but you are doing yourself a positive injury. Ah, drunkard, go on with your drunkenness, remember that every drunken fit leaves a plague behind it—that you will have to feel one day. It is pleasant to sin to-day, but it will not be pleasant to reap the harvest of it to-

morrow; the seeds of sin are sweet when we sow them, but the fruit is frightfully bitter when we come to house it at last. The wine of sin tasteth sweet when it goeth down, but it is as gall and vinegar in the bowels. Take heed, ye that hate Christ and oppose his gospel, for as certainly as the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and his religion is true, you are heaping on your head a load of injury, instead of deriving good. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

But kick as the ox might, it had to go forward at last. We have seen a horse stand still in the street, and the driver, who had not very much patience with him, has so belaboured him, that we wondered how the poor horse could stand still under such a torrent of blows; but we have observed at last that the horse is obliged to go on, and we wondered what he got by standing still. It is just the same with you. If the Lord means to make a Christian out of you, you may kick against Christianity, but he will have you at last. If Jesus Christ intends your salvation you may curse him, but he will make you preach his gospel one day, if he likes to do so. Ah, if Christ had willed it, Voltaire who cursed him, might have made a second apostle Paul. He could not have resisted sovereign grace, if Christ had so determined. If anyone had told the apostle Paul when he was going to Damascus, that he would one day become a preacher of Christianity, he would, no doubt, have laughed at it as ridiculous nonsense; but the Lord had the key of his will, and he wound it up as he pleased. And so it will be with you—if he has determined to have you as one of his followers—

"If, as the eternal mandate ran,
Almighty grace arrest that man,"—

Almighty grace will arrest you; and the bloodiest of persecutors will be made the boldest of saints. Then why persecutest thou me? Perhaps you are despising the very Saviour you will one day love; trying to knock down the very thing that you will one day try to build up. Mayhap you are persecuting the men you will call your brothers and sisters. It is always well for a man not to go so far that he cannot go back respectably. Now do not go too far in opposing Christ, for one of these times it may be you will be very glad to come crouching at his feet. But there is this sad reflection, if Christ does not save you, still you must go on. You may kick against the pricks, but you cannot get away from his dominion; you may kick against Christ, but you cannot cast him from his throne; you cannot drag him out of heaven. You may kick against him, but you cannot prevent his condemning you at last. You may laugh at him, but you cannot laugh away the day of judgment. You may scoff at religion; but all your scoffs cannot put it out. You may jeer at heaven; but all your jeers will not take one single note from the harp of the redeemed. No, the thing is just the same as if you did not kick; it makes no difference except to yourself. Oh how foolish must you be, to persevere in a rebellion which is harmful to none but your own soul; which is not injurious to him whom you hate, but which, if he pleases, he can stop, or if he doth not stop, he can and will revenge.

III. And now I close up by addressing myself to some here, whose hearts are already touched. Do you this morning feel your need of a Saviour? Are you conscious of your guilt in having opposed him, and has the Holy Spirit made you willing now to confess your sins? Are you saying, "Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner?" Then I have good news for you. Paul, who persecuted Christ, was forgiven. He says he was the very chief of sinners, but he obtained mercy. So shall you. Nay, more, Paul not only obtained mercy, he obtained honour. He was made an honoured minister to preach the gospel of Christ, and so may you. Yea, if thou repentest, Christ may make use of you to bring others to him. It strikes me with wonder when I see how many of the very greatest of sinners have become the most useful of men. Do you see John Bunyan yonder? He is cursing God. He goes into the belfry and pulls the bell on Sunday, because he likes the bell-ringing, but when the church door is open, he is playing bowls upon the village green. There is the village tap, and there is no one that laughs so loud there as John Bunyan. There are some people going to the meeting house; there is no one curses them so much as John. He is a ringleader in all vice. If there is a hen roost to be robbed, Jack's your man. If there is any iniquity to be done, if there is any evil in the parish, you need not guess twice, John Bunyan is at the bottom of it. But who is it stands there in the dock before the magistrate? Who is it I

heard just now—"If you let me out of prison to-day, I will preach the gospel to-morrow, by the help of God?" Who was it that lay twelve years in prison, and when they said he might go out if he would promise not to preach, replied, "No, I will be here till the moss grows on mine eyelids, but I must and will preach God's gospel as soon as I have liberty?" Why, that is John Bunyan, the very man who cursed Christ the other day. A ringleader in vice has become the glorious dreamer, the very leader of God's hosts. See, what God did for him, and what God did for him he will do for you, if now you repent and seek the mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

"He is able, he is willing, doubt no more."

Oh! I trust I have some here who have hated God, but who are nevertheless God's elect; some that have despised him, but who are bought with blood; some that have kicked against the pricks, but yet almighty grace will bring them onward. There are some here, I doubt not, who have cursed God to his face, who shall one day sing hallelujahs before his throne; some that have indulged in lusts all but bestial, who shall one day wear the white robe, and move their fingers along the golden harps of the glorified spirits in heaven. Happy is it to have such a gospel to preach to such sinners! To the persecutor, Christ is preached. Come to Jesus whom thou hast persecuted.

"Come, and welcome, sinner, come."

And now bear with me one moment if I address you yet again. The probability stares me in the face that I may have but very few more opportunities of addressing you upon subjects that concern your soul. My hearer, I shall arrogate nothing to myself, but this one thing—"I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God," and God is my witness with how many sighs, and tears, and prayers, I have laboured for your good. Out of this place I believe thousands have been called; among you whom I now see there is a large number of converted persons; according to your own testimony you have had a thorough change, and you are not now what you were. But I am conscious of this fact, that there are many of you who have attended here now almost these two years, who are just what you were when you first came. There are some of you whose hearts are not touched. You sometimes weep, but still your lives have never been changed; you are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity." Well, sirs, if I never address you again, there is one favour that I would crave of you. If you will not turn to God, if you are determined to be lost, if you will not hear my rebuke nor turn at my exhortation, I ask this one favour; at least let me know, and let me have this confidence, that I am clear of your blood. I think you must confess this. I have not shunned to preach of hell with all its horrors, until I have been laughed at, as if I always preached upon it. I have not shunned to preach upon the most sweet and pleasing themes of the gospel, till I have feared lest I should make my preaching effeminate, instead of retaining the masculine vigour of a Boanerges. I have not shunned to preach the law; that great commandment has wrung in your ears, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." I have never feared the great, nor have I courted their smile; I have rebuked nobility as I would rebuke the peasantry, and to everyone of you I have dealt a portion of meat in due season. I know that this much can be said of me—"Here stands one that never feared the face of man yet;" and I hope never will. Amidst contumely, and rebuke, and reproach, I have sought to be faithful to you and to my God. If then, you will be damned, let me have this one thing as a consolation for your misery, when I shall think of so frightful a thought—that you are not damned for the want of calling after; you are not lost for the want of weeping after, and not lost, let me add, for the want of praying after. In the name of him who shall judge the quick and dead according to my Gospel, and of him that shall come in the clouds of heaven, and by that fearful day when the pillars of this earth shall totter, and the heavens shall fall about your ears—by that day when "Depart, ye cursed," or "Come, ye blessed," must be the dread alternative, I charge you, lay these things to heart, and as I shall face my God to account for my honesty to you, and my faithfulness to him, so remember, you must stand before his bar, to give an account of how you heard, and how you acted after hearing; and woe unto you if, having been lifted up like Capernaum with privileges, you should be cast down like Sodom and Gomorrah, or lower still than they, because you repented not.

Oh! Master! turn sinners to thyself; for Jesus sake! Amen.

THE TWO DISCIPLES' JOURNEY TO EMMAUS.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 11, 1858,

BY THE REV. J. F. S. GORDON, D.D.

IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, GLASGOW.

"And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."—Luke xxiv. 28, 29.

ON the day of the resurrection of our blessed Lord, two of the disciples were on their way to Emmaus, a village some short distance from Jerusalem. In what frame of mind they journeyed, we can be at no loss to discover; for when our Lord appeared to them, we are told they were engaged in communing and reasoning together of all the things which had happened so recently at Jerusalem—and that his first question to them was, in these words, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" Their answer showed their doubts and their suspense. Their minds were full of Him, whom they acknowledged as "mighty in word and deed, before God and all the people," yet, nevertheless they could not bring themselves to speak of Him as "more than a prophet;" they manifest their astonishment at the tale of the reported resurrection, yet never seem to call to mind the many predictions which had been uttered on the subject. No sooner, however, does the Saviour begin to expound to them the Scriptures concerning Himself, than their hearts "burn within them;"—they listen with the deep interest of men whose thoughts are all centred in one absorbing subject; who honestly seek for more light and knowledge, who desire to be convinced, and to be led into the way of truth. Their hearts revive as they listen to the teaching of the unknown Companion; they feel that it is good to be in his company; and when he seems disposed to part from them, (just as the dove often moves its wings ere it takes flight,) they constrain him to continue with them—"Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

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Our own condition, in this our state of earthly trial, is not wholly unlike that of the disciples of Emmaus. At least, like them, we tread a path of sorrow, with blinded eyes, and uncertain steps; like them, we wander forth, desolate and lonely; like them, we have to learn the extent of our own infirmities and incapacities; like them, as we commune together, we are "*sad*," and, in truth, have much to make us so. Why, then, should we not betake ourselves to the same Friend in whom they found solace? Why should we not address our prayer deliberately and habitually to that Saviour whom they invoked unconsciously? Why should we not say to him as *they* said, "Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

"Far spent," indeed it is, even to the youngest, and healthiest, and strongest, among us:—"Far spent," inasmuch as by every one of us, time has been wasted which can never be recalled, opportunities neglected, which will never be vouchsafed again; talents abused or frittered away, not one of which can be so treated with impunity; and means of grace despised, not one of which, but if duly improved, would have shown itself of inestimable value. "The day is far spent." To some among us, it may be, that few more working hours remain. Some may be conscious of this by their own sensations; they may feel the inroads of time, the ravages of care and sorrow, the weariness of lengthened toil. The infirmities of advancing age, and the failure of the powers of life may unequivocally warn them that night is coming on; that before long they shall be able to work no more; that "*the years draw nigh, when they shall say that they have no pleasure in them.*" To none of us is there any assurance that the day is *not* far spent, for even though in respect of the usual length of years allotted to man, we may not have yet lived out half our time, who can tell that his sun shall not go down while it is yet day? Who can tell how near, or how far distant, that night may be in which his soul may be required of him?

"It is toward evening!" Hour after hour has passed away;—the early dawn,—the fresh and joyous morning,—the scorching noontide with its heat and burden,—the afternoon with its weariness and exhaustion,—each in turn have departed; and change, and chance, and sin, and sorrow, have been the companions of each. The brilliant hopes which we conceived, have shrunk and withered: the schemes which were to have ripened, have, for the most part, ended like untimely fruit, in rottenness and decay. Yea, whether in the main, success or disappointment has been the result of our exertions, the closing day must elicit from every one of us the same confession, that "*all is vanity.*" Pleasure, riches, power, rank, youth, strength, beauty, health, all perish in the using. "*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.*"

"It is toward evening!" Hour after hour has passed away; and though we have laboured on to the last, not an hour has elapsed but some one of our fellow-labourers has been called from our side to go home, and wait to receive his wages from his Master's hand. When we were children, the

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children whom we loved, and who were the companions of our merry games, died around us, and gave us, perhaps, the first taste of that sorrow, which has ever since been mingled with the cup. In our youth we were shocked at seeing those of our own age fall beside us under some sudden blow, and we mourned at the time with all the depth and emotion of innocent and feeling hearts. But, we lived on; we lived to manhood, still shocked and warned by the successive deaths of those contemporaries who seemed but as yesterday to have the same prospects of life with ourselves. And now, as we look back, and see, perhaps, not one in ten of those with whom we started on our career surviving: as we find a new generation preparing to supply our place; what thought,—as year by year, Advent and Christmas, Lent and Passion Week, Easter and Whitsuntide return (seasons sanctified each by its own associations of the past); what thought, I say, can come more naturally to our minds than this, that our remaining time must needs be short; that our opportunities of serving God in the courts of his house are rapidly drawing to an end; that “it is toward evening, that the day is far spent!”

We read that the “Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” But, we do not constantly witness how even the Word of God is *wrested* by individuals in support of some novel vagary, just as it furnishes the profane to point a jest! My brethren, the Scriptures will never make “our hearts burn within us,” if we carry thereto the same feelings as to a treatise on some branch of human science. There are inner meanings in the Inspired Volume which will never be reached through learning and ingenuity, but which *open* before the humble and prayerful inquirer: so that passages on which criticism is vainly turning all its strength, and to which it can attach nothing but an obscure sense, reveal to many an uneducated and simple-minded Christian the counsels of God and the bliss of the unseen. “The pure in heart, they shall see God.” The teaching is not merely to be stored in the memory, but to be woven into the practice. Let there be a real anxiety for spiritual wisdom, an honest wish to walk in God’s holy ways, and an endeavour to cultivate good dispositions,—and one lesson shall lead on to another,—field after field shall unfold beauty and grandeur—increased light will revive, and the vanishing of darkness encourage the Christian. The power of Christ’s resurrection is manifest in his Word. Christ reveals himself, in the relief of the lonely penitent’s yearning heart. He reveals himself in the interpretation of his own blessed Word, and in its application to our own individual case. It is not a *lifeless* but a *living* Word, for it makes “our hearts burn within us.”

The position in which the two disciples stood is worthy of notice. They were within a hair-breadth of missing the most important truth which the

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interview was preparing their minds for. Had they been too weary with their walk to importune for further converse, Christ would have passed on, and they would have lost the privilege of the vouchsafed manifestation. It seemed to depend on their embracing the present opportunity, and not allowing it to slip, in hopes of presently obtaining another, whether or not they should be satisfied of the great truth of Christ's resurrection. And here it is that the narrative should be most specially instructive to ourselves,—setting forth a common danger, and delivering a general warning. For, there are many who often miss the manifestation of Christ, through the letting slip some presented opportunity, in which it has depended on the *immediately* obeying some impulse, or hearkening to some suggestion, whether the door should fly open, or remain closed against them. Had the disciples, when at Emmaus, parted from their Teacher, and gone alone into the house, the golden opportunity would have been lost, and there would have been no manifestation of Christ to the soul. But, when “He made as though he would have gone further,” they could not bear to part with Him with whom they were so entranced,—therefore, “they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” Jesus loves to be “*constrained*.” He wishes to take up his abode in our hearts. He longs to reveal Himself. “And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him : and he vanished out of their sight.” In the acts of worship they found the Saviour—“And their eyes were opened, and they knew him.” How different is the aspect of the acts of worship, as soon as our eyes are opened, from what it has been before ! What a change is it from Luz to Bethel ! The patriarch Jacob beheld the sun set ; its light lingered on the walls of Luz ; the cold grey rocks were about him ; the hills surrounded him ; the shades of evening stretched out over him ; night rose over the sky ; the stones of the place were his pillow, and he slept. All looked of the earth, earthy. He had *dreamed* while thus he slept,—and his dream was truer than his waking. “Behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven ; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it.” All is now heaven, heavenly. Then Jacob awoke, he exclaims, “Surely the Lord is in this place : and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place ! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” What caused the change ? Just the Altar of God. It was Bethel, the House of God, where his forefather Abraham had worshipped, and where he had reared the altar of the Lord, and offered up sacrifices. The visions of faith is more real than the objects of our sense. The former has indeed substance, which increases in the distinctness of its features and the magnificence of its objects, till, from the shadowy image of a land far away, resting like mist on the horizon, it grows into the “Mount Zion, the city

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of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Appropriate architecture has a high value: we are to give God our best results of architectural skill: to Him we are to consecrate decorative art, to make His House "exceeding magnificent." And rather a striking feature of the present day, is the strong re-action from the contemptible barns of churches which characterized the last century. Even those who cry down all significant ceremonial and holy rites, of late years so appreciate this revival of what the populace nickname "*Puseyism*," by uprearing fanes rivalling those of the middle ages. Every one of any taste or head who walks along the aisles of a noble Cathedral, beneath its bold and lofty arches, and amid its "dim religious light," cannot but feel that *such* is a *fitting place* for audience with the Most High,—and that it is not seemly to build for the Infinite an abode, whose very meanness bespeaks a poor reverence for the Eternal Majesty. A magnificent House of Prayer is in itself a truly impressive object: still, we must have an inner eye which can discern far more grand, and solemn, and impressive things than mere human art can fashion. Thus, when faith is brought to bear on the services and worship of the sanctuary, they assume a very different character and aspect from that which they had before. Till God enlightens the understanding, they are only a form. However well arranged or celebrated, they address themselves merely to the taste or intellect: they are of the earth, earthy. The church may be stately and beautiful—the various offices may be all beautiful and enchanting: but the building, whether a gorgeous cathedral, or a square house, poor in style, is only a mass of stones, and the worship only an assemblage of sounds, until our eyes are opened from above. Our taste may be gratified, our eyes and ears may be pleased, but our hearts will be unmoved, until God vouchsafes us spiritual discernment. Sunday after Sunday, we may join in the same prayers, the same Psalms, the same Scriptures repeated over and over again—but unless we join in them with awe and reverence, we shall return without a blessing, we shall never know that "the Lord is in this place." But when we have discovered, with spiritual insight, the Altar of God upreared in the House of God, then shall we constantly frequent it,—even the altar on which we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, body, soul, and spirit; the altar whereof we have a right to eat; the Altar where One offers Himself for us to us, who is the life of the world and the light of men; the Holy Table where we join the Lamb's marriage feast, that we, entering in, may sup with him, and he with us. While awe and alarm, and the overwhelming sense of our unworthiness, would repel us from gathering up even the crumbs under God's Table, yet, the invitation and call of Christ—He who is within, the centre of radiance and glory, does not reject but invite "the weary and heavy laden." His voice, and the voice of his spouse, the church, is, "Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." "Do this in remembrance of me."

"Having, therefore, brethren, boldness through the blood of Jesus to enter

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into the holiest by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh ; and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." Through the open gate of heaven, out of God's house on earth, let us lift up our hearts on high, even to the heaven of heavens, (as St. John beheld it,) where the unutterable glory of divinity streams from every wound of the atoning Lamb, "as it had been slain," as the centre point of ineffable love ; where the eyes of the everlasting Father rest in benignant complacency on the one continual sacrifice of his beloved Son, and teaches us to carry out his will on earth as it is done in heaven. However, let us carefully remember, that, as Christ opens our eyes to the greatness of our Christian privileges, and admits us into the inner sanctuary,—and declares that, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him,"—so, our *inner life* must show *consistency*. When Moses had been in the Mount with God, his *face shone*. So, when we have been in intimate communion, our lives should shine out in deeper devotion and in stricter watchfulness. We must not rest in ordinances, or in the feelings which they excite in us at the time. Take we good heed, therefore, that our inner life and outward actions do not discord : let us remember that we are the salt of the earth, lamps lit in a dark place, the city set upon a hill. "Ye are the light of the world."

As we advance on through the forty days' sojourn of our Blessed Lord between his Easter and his Ascension, and ponder his various revelations of himself, to Mary Magdalene, to the two on their way to Emmaus, to St. Thomas, and to the eleven,—He sums up all blessings in this concluding blessing, (as he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifted up his hands to bless)—"Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you." The blessedness given us is not of this world, or of our present life, but a golden cord let down out of heaven, to draw up our hearts thitherward, awaiting, in the temple of his church below, his second glorious Advent,—when, out of the place which He is now preparing for us, He shall come again with the last crowning blessing in His Hands, and take us by it to Himself, that where He, the Head is, there may we His members follow. Nothing but the thought of Christ's abiding presence, of His being in us, and with us,—the sharer of our trials, and the companion of our pilgrimage, can in any way fill up the aching void—can pluck out the stings of sorrow and disappointment, and change our despair and repinings at the vanity of things temporal, into grateful acknowledgments and childlike trust ; that He, who, in hitherto preserving us, has, at the same time, been gradually weaning us from this world, and therein has afforded us abundant ground of *hope* that he, who has *hitherto* delivered, will yet deliver. It was the Psalmist's humble trust that the loving-kindness and mercy of God should follow him all the days of his life ; and surely they who are conscious that they are endeavouring to

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walk in the Psalmist's steps, may repose themselves on the same comfortable hope. Pilgrims along life's stern and dreary way, we have still, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, a Companion in our path, who walks beside us, unseen, indeed, yet close at hand, who sympathizes with us as having shared our infirmities and sorrows, who is our Brother as well as our Lord, who, though as yet our eyes are holden that we should not know Him as He is, knows us, and loves, and pities us, in spite of that knowledge, and who is willing to tarry with us, and to be the Guide we so much need ; or rather, who hath already guided us, and hath talked with us by the way, even before our hearts began to burn within us.

This, my brethren, is the state of mind at which the Christian will be continually endeavouring to arrive—a simple committal of himself to his God and Saviour—with prayers for His continual presence, and entire, unreserved, unhesitating trust in His ever-watchful Providence. The Christian knows that, so long as God continues him in the world, he must continue in the fellowship of his Saviour's sufferings ; and, therefore, his desire is to be made *like unto him in faith and patience*. If hitherto he has had much of trial, he trusts, that this, his experience, may enable him to meet those troubles which are in store for him hereafter, in a better and more submissive spirit. If as yet God's chastening hand has fallen lightly on him, he endeavours to discipline himself, that so he may bear the rod when it comes upon him. If as yet, neither chance nor change, sickness nor sorrow—care, anxiety, nor disappointment, have dimmed the brightness of his eye, nor imprinted a furrow on his brow, he soberly reflects that the probability is that some or all of them will speedily be his portion, and he prepares himself in them, to meet his God. The fewer the trials that have as yet been sent, the heavier may be those which are impending. The rarer the opportunities, hitherto, of showing forth faith and resignation, the brighter must be the light exhibited, when God shall put him to the test. Known unto God only, are the destinies which await any one of us. The Christian knows that the longer he lives, sorrows must await him, more disappointment of hopes, more breaking of long established ties, more changes, more pain, more tears, more bereavements, more death. And he knows that these things must fall on him, as his own strength is failing, and as sickness and infirmity are wasting down his bodily powers and the buoyancy of his mind, and bringing him to to the house—dark and narrow—appointed for all living.

It is hard to rejoice in tribulation ; to “yield most humble and hearty thanks,” when some object, who has been the light of our eyes, is removed from “the miseries of this sinful world ;” but he who sends our trials, sends them one by one, as we are able to bear them—gradually teaching us, by our own experience, that it is good for us to be afflicted. Could our eyes pierce into the future ; could we look into each successive grave that is opened beside us, till we have reached our own ; could we at once, and at

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one view, reckon up the amount of pain and sickness, of misfortune and temporal loss, of disappointment and blighted prospects, which is allotted to each in his earthly career; could we apprehend, at the outset, all that is involved in a *daily cross* and a following of Him who died thereon,—the path, how arduous, how rugged, how full of peril; how, as each ascent is gained, a higher and a higher peak still opens upon us which must be surmounted ere the summit can be reached; could we know all that the Christian profession requires of us, at our setting out, our spirits would be broken, our resolution would fail, and we would shrink, perhaps, altogether from the contest. But our merciful Father, in his love and tender compassion, leads us on little by little, according to our strength; showing us no more of the way than we can accomplish without exhaustion; concealing the coming, till we have escaped the present danger—and thus gradually teaching us to trust Him, to wish for no more light than He vouchsafes us, and to be content to follow step by step in the direction He calls us. The “man of the world” is callous to all this,—shrinks from the thought of his inevitable fate; and if *forced* to look forward to it, dismal is the view; dismal to all it must be who have not habituated themselves to the thought that their blessings are given for a time only; dismal to all who have not learned to possess as though they possessed not; to die daily, and to sacrifice by mortification and constant self-denial even things indifferent, for Christ's sake.

The hour of death—that hour with blessings on its wings—is that which is to give the weary Christian pilgrim the liberty, the rest, and peace which here he has not. He long has looked for it, and therefore he calmly meets it—not boldly and presumptuously—with no blind self-confidence; but meekly and trustfully,—without despondency, without dismay, with trembling, and yet with godly hope. He *knows* the Saviour in whom he has trusted—the all-sufficiency of his atonement—and the power of his intercession with the Father. Wretched and miserable sinner as he knows himself to be, he still trusts *that* mercy and loving-kindness to bring peace at the last, and provide him a place beneath the footstool of the Redeemer's throne. When “the day is far spent,” the Good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep, will readily enter the chamber of the dying Christian, and be “known to him,” as he was known to the disciples of Emmaus, in the “breaking of bread,”—as the High Mystery of His own Death and Passion is, *once more*, celebrated. And if darkness follow, through the decay and feebleness of the outward man—and the dissolving Christian scarcely seems conscious of the presence of his Lord—then we can only say, that if, as with the disciples, the Lord hath “vanished out of sight,” it is that he may appear in more glorious form, and welcome to Paradise the disembodied soul. God grant us such a happy exit from the strife and toil of this mortal life, for the sake and through the merits of Jesus Christ.

THE EFFECTS OF PIETY ON A NATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON TUESDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 6, 1867,

BY THE REV. W. M. PUNSHON,

AT THE CITY ROAD CHAPEL.

"And he said, Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake."—Genesis xviii. 32.

MOST remarkable and most encouraging is this instance of prevailing prayer. It might well stimulate us to the exercise of sublimer faith when we behold a mortal thus wrestling with Omnipotence—wrestling with such holy boldness that justice suspends its inflictions, and cannot seal the sinner's doom. Passing over that, however, with all the doctrines it involves, there is another thought couched in the text, to which, at the present time, I want to direct your attention. The history of nations must be regarded, by every enlightened mind, as the history of the providence of God. It is not enough, if we would study history aright, that we follow in the track of battles, that we listen to the wail of the vanquished and to the shout of the conquerors; it is not enough that we excite in ourselves a sort of hero worship of the world's foster-gods, the stalwart and noble peerage of mankind; it is not enough that we trace upon the page of history the subtle and intricate developments of human character; to study history aright, we must find God in it, we must always recognize the ever present and the ever acting Divinity, working all things according to the counsel of his benevolent and holy will. This is the prominent aspect in which history ought to be studied, or grievous dishonour is done to the Universal Ruler, and intense injury is inflicted upon the spirits of men. God, himself, you remember, has impressively announced the guilt and danger of those who regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands. The history of ancient Israel, for instance, the chosen people, led by the pillar of cloud by day, and by the pillar of fire by night, through the marchings of that perilous wilderness, what was it but the successful development, in a series of wondrous deliverances, of the ever active providence of God! There were some things in that history which of course were incapable either of transfer or of repetition, but the history itself included, and was ordained to set forth certain prominent principles for the recognition of all nations, principles which were intended to assert the rights of God, and to assert the obligations of his creatures, principles which are to be consummated in their evolution amid the solemnities of the last day. It was so in the case of Sodom, punished as an example to God's chosen people. Their transgressions had become obduracy, their obduracy had blossomed out into punishment. But a chance in the Divine government yet remained to them; peradventure there might have been ten righteous in the city.

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If there had been ten righteous in the city, those pious men would have been the substance, the essence, the strength of the devoted nation ; for them, on their account, for their sakes, the utter ruin of the land might have been averted, and through them, after the Divine displeasure had passed by, there might have sprung up renewed strength and recovered glory. We may fairly, I think, take this as a general principle, that pious men in all ages of the world's history, are the true strength of the nations in which, in God's providence, they are privileged to live ; oftentimes averting calamity, oftentimes restoring strength and blessing when, but for them, it would have lapsed and gone for ever. This is the principle which I purpose, God helping me, to apply for a moment to our own times, and to the land in which we live ; and in order to give the subject a great deal of a practical character, I will in the first place paint the pious man, and then show the effect which the consistent maintenance of a course of piety may be expected to insure.

I. In the first place, who are the pious men ! Who are they whom God, who never judges in short-sightedness, who sees the end from the beginning, and who cannot possibly be deceived or mistaken in his estimate of human character, who are they whom God designates, "the holy seed that shall be the substance thereof"—the pious men that are the strength of the nations in which they live ! In order to sustain the honourable appellation which is thus assigned, men must cultivate habits of thought and of practice that are appropriate to such a character. I will just mention two or three particulars.

In the first place, they are pious men who separate themselves avowedly and at the utmost possible distance from surrounding wickedness. Men are placed under the influence of religion, in order that they may separate from sin, in order that they may be governed by habits of righteousness and true holiness. In times when depravity is especially flagrant there is a special obligation upon pious men to bring out their virtues into braver and more prominent exercise, regarding that surrounding depravity as in no wise a reason for flinching, or for cowardice, or for compromise, but rather for the augmented firmness of their purity. Now, it cannot for one moment be doubted that in the times in which we live iniquity does most flagrantly abound. There is not a sin which does not exist and exist in all rankness and impurity.

Because of swearing the land mourns. God's Sabbaths are systematically desecrated, his sanctuaries contemptuously forsaken, his ordinances trampled under foot, his ministers met with the leer oftentimes due to detected conspirators, and regarded as banded traitors who have conspired against the liberties of the world. The lusts of the flesh scarcely affect to conceal their filthiness, everywhere unveiling their forms, and everywhere diffusing their pestilence. We do not venture upon any sort of comparison, we do not venture to compare the aggregate depravity of this age with the depravity of any age that has preceded. We do but affirm the general fact, that the heart of man is "deceitful and desperately wicked," and that the depravity we see around us, the exhibition of the carnal mind, "which is enmity against God," is most fearfully aggravated by the abundance of privilege by which the people are surrounded. Now, it is the duty, I repeat, of those who would have God's estimate of them as pious men, that they should regard this depravity as invoking them to bear the testimony of unsullied and spotless holiness. Let the exhortations on this matter which are scattered throughout the pages of the Bible be solemnly pondered. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed according to the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove

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what that is good, and acceptable and perfect will of God." "Abstain from the appearance of evil." In times when depravity is especially flagrant do not even borrow of the garments of falsehood; do not let there be any meretricious semblance of that which is hateful in the sight of God. Abstain from the appearance of evil. Come out of it so thoroughly that the fellowships and intercourses of social life do not seduce you into a sort of complicity. "Be not partakers of other men's sins. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove." "Be ye not unequally yoked together to unbelievers, for what fellowship hath light with darkness, and what concord hath Christ with Belial, and what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" "Cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; perfect in holiness in the fear of God." You will not fail to perceive that the whole of these passages have one aim and one summons, and that is holiness—holiness, as spotless in the secrecy of individual consciousness as in the jealous watch of men—holiness shrined in the heart and influencing benignly and transformingly the entire character—holiness, that is something more chivalrous than national honour—holiness, something that maintains a higher standard of right than commercial integrity—holiness, something that is more noble minded than the conventional courtesies of life—holiness which comes out in every day existence, hallowing each transaction, taking hold of the money as it passes through the hand in ordinary currency, and stamping upon it a more noble image and superscription than Caesar's—holiness written upon the bells of the horses and upon the frontlet of the forehead, an immaculate and spotless lustre exuding, so to speak, from the man in daily life, so that the world starts back from him, and tells at a glance that he has been with Jesus. Now, brethren, it is to this, to the exercise and maintenance of this unflinching holiness that you are called. Here is the first prominent obligation of pious men. You are to confront every evil with its exact and diametrical opposite; and he who in circumstances like these in which we stand ventures to hesitate, or ventures to parley, brand him as a traitor to his country, a traitor to his religion and a traitor to his God.

Secondly, if you would be what God regards as pious men, you must cultivate firm attachment to the doctrines of Christian truth. There is, brethren, in our day a very widely diffused defectiveness of religious profession, a very widely diffused departure from the faith that was "once delivered to the saints." This is a Christian country. Men call it so, I know, but there is in daily practice a strange and sad departure from the precepts of Christianity—ay, on the part of men by whom the theory of this being a Christian country is most noisily and boisterously maintained. Are you strangers to the presence in the midst of us of the dark and subtle spirit of unbelief—a venal press and active emissaries poisoning the fresh blood of youth, disheartening the last hope of age, and which, if their own account of the circulation of their pernicious principles is to be relied upon, has already tainted hundreds of thousands with that infectious venom whose poison lies not in the destruction of the body! True, it is for the most part bland, conciliatory, plausible, rather than audacious and braggart as in former times, veiling its deadly purpose in song or in story. But the dagger is not the less deadly because the haft is jewelled, and infidelity is not the less infidelity, not the less pernicious, not the less accursed, because genius has woven its stories to adorn it, and because fancy has wreathed it into song. Are you strangers

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to the avowed denial on the part of some of the divinity and atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ—to the man-eating opinion which relies for its own salvation upon the piled up fabric of its own righteousness, or which through the flinty rocks of self-righteous morality would tunnel out a passage to the eternal throne! Are you strangers to the workings of the grand apostasy darkening the sunlight of the Saviour's love, dislocating the perfection of the Saviour's work, hampering the course of the atonement with the frail entangled framework of human merit, restless in its endeavours to regain its ascendancy—crafty, and vigilant, and formidable as ever! Are you strangers to the heresy which has made its appearance in the midst of a body once deeming itself the fairest offspring of the Reformation, and which would exclude thousands from covenanted mercies, because they own not priestly pretensions, and conform not to traditional rites! Are you strangers in the other quarter of the horizon and of the sky to dark and lowering portents that have come over with rationalistic and German infidelity! Brethren, there is a duty solemn and authoritative resting upon the pious men that they hold fast that which was "once delivered to the saints." Let the exhortations, too, on this matter, be carefully pondered. "Be no more children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of man and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to betray." "Stand fast"—not loose, not easily shifted, not having a firm foundation—"stand fast in the faith once delivered unto the saints." Be "rooted in the faith;" be "grounded in the faith;" "contend earnestly for the faith." Brethren, here is another invocation, and it is solemnly binding upon you. And while there are some around us that would rob Christ of his grace, and others that would rob Christ of his crown, and others, more royal felons, that would steal both the one and the other, let it be ours to take our stand firm and unswerving by the altars of the truth; let our determination go forth to the universe, "I determine to know nothing among men, save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

And, then, thirdly, if you would be pious men as God estimates piety, you must cultivate cordial, brotherly love. In times like these, there is a solemn obligation resting upon all "who hold the head" to cultivate the spirit of unity with all "who hold the head." By unity, we do not mean uniformity. There is none; there can be none in the free universe of God. You have it not in nature. You may go out into the waving woodland, when death is on the trees, and you may prune their riotous growth, and mould, and shape, and cut them into something like a decent, a decorous uniformity; but the returning spring, when it comes, will laugh at your aimless labour. Wherever there is life, there will be found variety of engaging forms which attract and fascinate the eye. We do not mean uniformity, therefore; the harmony of voices, or the adjustment of actions, the drowsy repetition of one belief, or the harmonious intonation of one liturgy; but we mean "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," which we are to intensely labour to maintain and procure. Let the exhortations on this matter also be very solemnly pondered. "A new commandment"—so that there are eleven commandments now; the decalogue has been added to by this new commandment, which is, indeed, the substance and essence of all the rest—"A new commandment give I unto you that ye love one another." "Be kindly affectioned one to another, in brotherly love, in honour preferring one another." Nay, the apostle does not hesitate to set it down as one of the surest evidences of Christian discipleship, "We know that we have passed from death

unto life, because we love the brethren." Compliance with these exhortations, is always imperative, especially imperative in seasons of national danger. Everything that is ominous, everything that is solemn, everything that is portentous around us, must be regarded as an earnest call to Christians to live together in love. This love is to be cherished everywhere, to be cherished toward those who are members of the same section of the universal church. Here, of course, there should be no orphan's heart. Here, all should feel themselves members of a commonwealth. There should be a rejoicing with those that do rejoice, and a weeping with those that weep; and, as by electric fire, the wants and the wishes of the one should be communicated to and acknowledged by the whole. But it should not only be cherished in our own communion, but toward all who hold "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." Wherever Christ is acknowledged, his grace magnified, his crown vindicated, his law made honourable, wherever the service of Christ is the aim, and the glory of Christ is the purpose, there the church should know as Christian and should hail as brethren. This duty is one that has been scandalously neglected in the times in which we live; and that neglect has darkened the aspect and augmented the perils of the times. Brethren, we must all amend if we would not betray. And when the church of Christ shall combine in heart as in spirit one, then shall the great building of the universe progress. God shall smile upon the workmen, "the glory of the latter house shall exceed the glory of the former," and the whole "building fitly framed together shall grow up into a holy temple of the Lord."

Then, fourthly, if we would be pious men as God estimates piety, we must be zealous in endeavour for the spread of the gospel, and for the conversion of the world. The errors and the crimes of which we have spoken render this essential. We have but to gather into our minds the contemplation of guilt so heinous, so offensive that it rises up in the presence of the Holy One, and calls for vengeance as he is seated upon his throne; then, we have but to remember the consequences of that guilt everywhere producing misery, everywhere drying up the sources of spiritual affluence, everywhere exposing to the unending perditions of hell. Now, brethren, nothing—and I would speak as one member of the army summoning others to the battle field—nothing will avail but the combined, and devoted, and persevering exertions of the members of the church below. How else shall we attempt to grasp with the depravity around us? Parliamentary enactments—what can they do? Threats to affright, or bribes to seduce, what can they do? Patronage in all its prestige and all its power, all that can be possibly brought out of state treasury or of state influence—what are they? Availless utterly without the power and Spirit of God. No; there must be a band of faithful men who are thus renovated and redeemed going forth in the name of the Lord. They must sustain the ministry in existing pastorates, and spread it wherever it has never been established. They must support institutions for the education of the entire man, institutions based upon the word of God. They must become themselves preachers of "the truth as it is in Jesus;" by prayer, by influence, by example, by effort, they must display all the grace which has redeemed them; and especially they must all in earnest, repeated, importunate supplications besiege the throne of grace in prayer. This is another summons, the last I shall give you on this matter to-night, and you are now to answer it with intense energy, with intense zeal. Coldness here is irrational. Ardour

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here is reason. Indifference here is selfishness. Earnestness, or if you will, enthusiasm here is the highest and sublimest wisdom.

If you would be pious men, therefore, as God estimates piety, you are to come out from the world and to be separated from it; you are to hold fast the doctrines you have received; you are to cultivate to each other the tenderest brotherly love; and you are to be energetic in heart for the conversion of the world.

II. I come now, secondly and briefly, to notice the effects which we are warranted in expecting such conduct as this to ensure. This is the doctrine of the text, that Sodom would have been spared if the ten righteous men had been there. Pious men are presented to us, therefore, as the safety of the nation in which they live. This is very beautifully presented in several other parts of Scripture. You have it for instance in the prophecy of Isaiah, lrv. 8, 9 :—"Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there." Then, again in the prophecy of Malachi, iii. 10, 11 :—"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts." We see here the development of the general principle for which we contend, that God preserves nations for the sake of pious men. The annals of the past show how very frequently he has put to nought statesmanship, fleets, and armies, and has rendered honour to truth, meekness, and righteousness. This I do solemnly believe to be the case in our own land in this crisis of its affairs, and I am bold to affirm my conviction, that the destinies of England and of the British Empire are at this moment in the hands of its pious men. If they be faithful to their high trust and to the vocation to which they are eminently and signally called, nothing can harm us; no weapon that is formed against us shall ever be able to prosper. I think this might be made out from the history of the past both as to temporal and spiritual matters. I appeal to you whether it is not manifest that the temporal interests of a nation are bound up in its piety! Let pious men prevail in a land, let the population become imbued with the spirit and with the leaven of evangelical godliness, what is the consequence? Order is at once preserved. As their holiness spreads, as their unworldly yet earnest example manifests itself and begins to be felt, sounder views prevail. The moral is felt to exert a supremacy over the secular; the political agitator the infidel demagogue, the philosophic theorist are scouted as physicians of no value; and men everywhere learn to submit to the orderly restraints and the well-regulated government of law. Let pious men prevail, and they will keep up the freedom of a land. I do not mean that crouching emasculation on the one hand, nor that ribald licentiousness on the other hand, which have both been dignified by the name by extreme political parties; but I mean well-ordered and rational liberty—liberty which respects the rights of other people at the same time that it asserts and vindicates its own—liberty which with one hand renders to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and with the other hand takes care to render to God the things that are God's—liberty which honours men as men, just because the Divine command tells it to "honour all men," and because all the world over there is nothing so royal as a man. That liberty will be preserved wherever pious men are found, and wherever the example of these pious men begins to spread itself amongst people.

And, then, pious men will preserve the prosperity of a land. There is a false prosperity which must be abandoned; there is a false honour which must be speedily foresworn; but that prosperity which is substantial and abiding will remain under the influence of piety. Art will minister then

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not to luxury but to truth; science will minister then not to infidelity but to truth; commerce will minister then not to selfishness but to benevolence; and other realms shall render to us their unbought and unpurchaseable homage, and the sons of our country, in their not unholy pride, may wave their banner to the wind, with the motto on it—

“He is the free man whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves besides.”

Yea, brethren, it is Britain's altar and not Britain's throne, Britain's Bible and not Britain's statute book, that is the great, and deep, and strong source of her national prosperity and renown. Do away with this, suffer that fidelity with which, in some humble measure, we have borne witness for God, to be relaxed, let our Sabbaths be sinned away at the bidding of unholy or mistaken mobs; let us enter into adulterous and unworthy alliance with the man of sin; let us be traitors to the trust with which God has invested us, to take care of the ark of the Lord, and the crown will lose its lustre, the peerage its nobility, and the senate its command; all the phases of social rank and order will be disjointed and disorganized; a lava tide of desolation will overwhelm all that is consecrated and noble, and angels may sing the dirge over a once great, but now hopelessly fallen people, “the glory is departed from Israel, because the ark of God is taken.” Keep fast by that ark, hold it; hold your attachment to it as the strongest element of being, and there shall be no bounds to the sacred magnificence of our nation, but the fires of the last day, when they consume all that is perishable and drossy, may see us with the light of the Divine presence gleaming harmlessly around our brow, and in our hand the open law for all the nations of mankind.

Those are temporal benefits. And, then, let there be pious men in the land, and spiritual benefits will also be secured. There will, for instance, be the defeat of erroneous opinions. Truth, when the spirit inspires it not, abstract truth, is weak and powerless. Truth, with the spirit in it is mighty, and will prevail. There can be no fear as to the result, because the world has never been left, and will never be left without the active spirit of God. Falsehood breaks out impetuously, just like one of those torrents that leap and rattle over the summit of the mountain after the thunder storm, overwhelming in the first outbreak, but dying away into insignificance and silence by and by; truth is the little spring that rises up imperceptibly and gently and flows on, unostentatious and noiseless, until at last navies are wafted on its bosom, and it pours its full volume of triumphant waters into the rejoicing sea. So it will be with truth; wealth cannot bribe it, talent cannot dazzle it, sophistry cannot overreach it, authority cannot please it—they all, like Felix, tremble in its majestic presence. Let pious men increase, and each one of them will become a centre of holiness; apostates will be brought back to the church, poor backsliders will be reclaimed into new found liberty and new created privilege, and there will be a cry like that on the summit of Carmel after the controversy was over, and had issued in the discomfiture of Baal—“The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God.”

And, then, better than all that, salvation of souls will be secured. The conversion of a soul is an infinitely greater triumph than the eradication of a false opinion. A false opinion may be crushed, and the man that holds it may be in imminent spiritual peril; convert the man's soul, and his opinions will come right by and by. Oh, if as you go from this place to-night, you were to behold the crowds of tempters and temptresses to evil that will cross your path as you travel homeward, if you think of their activity, of their earnestness to proselytize in the grand diabolical army, and to make sevenfold more the children of hell than they are themselves, and if you think of the apathy of the faithful, of the scantiness of effort, of the failure of faith, of the depression of endeavour, of the laxity of attachment on the part of believers in Jesus, surely there is enough to make you abashed and confounded. Brethren, I should like, if I could, to bring before you one solitary soul, to fasten your attention upon that soul, to transfix it as with a lightning glance before you, so that you might trace it in its downward path, see it as habit crusts it

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over, and selfishness rejoices over it, and the foul fiend gloats upon it in mockery, and disease, prematurely induced, comes upon it, and death waits for his prey, and hell is moved from beneath to meet it at its coming, and that you should follow it down into those dark and dread abodes, which man's pencil painteth not, and of which man's imagination, thank God, cannot conceive! Oh! draw the curtain over that; we cannot bear the sight! But as you think of the real spiritual peril in which not one—not a family—oh! if there were but a family, all London would be awake for its deliverance, but there is a world in danger—not one, not a family, not a island, not a continent, but a world—if I could only fasten that upon your consciences to-night, each one of you would surely go away with tearful eye and glad heart, glad that you were able to do anything for God, and would not rest without saying, "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake, I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as the brightness, and the salvation thereof as the lamp that burneth."

Just one parting word. If you would do all this, you must be pious yourselves; but do not be amongst the number of those who busy themselves in the externalisms of godliness, and are in some measure active in connection with the church of God, but are out of Christ, aliens themselves from the commonwealth of Israel. If you are not personally pious, you will be accomplices in drawing down the thunderbolt, and chargeable to that extent with your country's ruin, and the ruin of souls. Come to Christ now; let all your past iniquity be forgotten and forgiven as you bow before him in humiliation and in tears; he will not refuse you; he will not cast you out. Then enter upon a life of piety in spite of all that scoffers say. Ah! religion is not so mean a thing as infidels represent it to be! They curl the lip of scorn at us, and we can bear that; they flash the eye of hate at us, and we can bear that, as long as God looks upon us with complacency, as long as he has promised to crown us as conquerors in heaven, for which, by our spiritual conflicts and victories, we shall have come prepared. Oh, it is no mean thing. The saint, the righteous man, the pious believer in Jesus, is a patriot as well as a saint. The worldling may sneer and scorn, but we have a noble revenge, for it is pious men that have kept the conflagrating elements away from this long doomed world up to the present moment of its history; and if the ten righteous had not been in this enormous Sodom, long ere now would the fire-brand of destruction have struck it that it might be consumed in its deserved ruin. Thank God, there is hope for the world yet. When the prophet in depression and in sorrow was saying, "I even I, only am left, the prophet of the Lord," God pointed him to seven thousand that had never bowed the knee to Baal; and there are faithful ones in the secret places of the world yet—palm-tree-Christians growing up in unexpected places amid sandy soil, and with no companionship, who are flourishing in godly vigour and earnest in persevering prayer. There is hope for the world yet. Oh, for the increase of these pious men! Be you of the number of this unostentatious but valiant host. Do you pant for fame? You can find it here. Young men, there are some of you in the presence of God that have ambition high bounding in your hearts, who feel the elasticity of youth within you, who feel that the flight of your soaring spirit is not the flight of the lagging or the breathless; that there is something still within you that pants for a distinction other than you have yet attained—oh come to Christ, enlist yourselves in his service, be soldiers of the cross, fight moral battles, and your's shall be the victory. To you the church is looking; your fathers, worn out with labour, exhausted with the vicissitudes and the victories of years, are passing rapidly away, and they are wondering where their successors are. They have gone from us; just when we were expecting for them higher fields and wider triumphs, the fiery chariot came and they were not, and nothing was left for us but to cry as we followed the track of the cavalcade, in our hopelessness, almost in our agony—"My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." Oh! thank God, they have flung their mantles down, and it is for you to catch them, to robe yourselves to-day in the garments of the holy departed, and like them, to do and die.

"THE ONLY LIBERTY."

A Sermon

PREACHED ON TUESDAY EVENING, JULY 15TH, 1856,

BY THE REV. J. J. WEST, M.A.,

(*Rector of Winchelsea, Sussex*),

AT THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY SOMERSET, THAMES STREET,
LONDON.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—John viii. 32.

THERE have been three or four other verses in the Bible on my mind since I have been in the church to-night, and I have been exercised to know which verse to take as a text. One is in the Book of Ecclesiastes—"where the word of the King is there is power,"—and this, as well as the text I am preaching on, equally sets forth the great and essential doctrine of the SOVEREIGNTY OF JEHOVAH, in the declaration of his designs, and purposes, and mercies, to "His own elect." "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

May His doctrine "drop as the rain—distil as the dew." May a word in season be spoken to weary souls, and my ministry be blest with power and unction—may your hearts be touched and God exalted amongst us. May the Lord the Spirit bless these words to you, and make me rightly to divide the Word of TRUTH;—may the poor be comforted, and the needy edified and blest. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Now, first, observe how unmistakeably and absolutely this text sets forth the SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD! and destroys the very root of Arminianism and creature merit—proclaiming the power of HIM "who hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords"—and in the rightful exercise of that power, He (if it be now a time of favour) whose vesture and whose thigh is so engraven, is now proclaiming through his unworthy servant before you the positive and FREE GRACE statement, that all His people "SHALL know the TRUTH," and that the effect of that truth when really known, shall be liberty and freedom! "the TRUTH shall make you free."

Now, my hearers, it is a great comfort to me, and so it must be to every one who has received "the gift," to know that God has determined in his own "eternal purpose" that all his people shall know the truth.

Sweet as is the word GOSPEL—blessed as it is in all its length, and depth, and breadth, and height of meaning—yet, to my mind, there is something much stronger in the word, TRUTH, it seems more discriminating.

Now, what is the truth? Listen to me! ELECTION—PARTICULAR REDEMPTION and PERSONAL CONVERSION by the HOLY GHOST! and the truth of each and of all these cardinal doctrines, carried out *practically* and *experimentally* by the power of God in every believer's soul, and by which the Christian stands distinguished from the whole scheme of Popish and Arminian errors. And then the mercy of knowing *further* as the TRUTH, that every ELECT and every REDEEMED man must be "born again," of the Holy Spirit at the *set time of favour*. And hence (as I am continually insisting on to my own home flock), there is *no doubt* about the conversion of souls! There need be no anxiety about it—the WORK of GOD is absolute; the mandate of the written word is—and the poor sinner gains consolation from it as written in the book of Psalms—"THOU HAST GIVEN COMMANDMENT TO SAVE ME;" and who can alter THAT COMMAND? And there is not a man, nor a woman, nor a child in London—there is not one amid the masses of this densely-peopled city—the greatest city upon the habitable earth, the most favoured city, certainly, in a temporal sense, in all the world—there is not, I say, a man nor a woman, nor a child in London, loved by God before all worlds, given by the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, as the triune God, to God the Son, to be redeemed by his precious blood, upon Calvary's cross—there is not one such, despite all the devil's power, and despite all his own personal guilt and sin, but shall be "born again," of the Holy Spirit at the appointed time, and become a new creature in Christ Jesus; and then the personal and experimental test of this will be the *cry* of the soul—under a feeling sense of guilt and sin—and the reality will be known, as was the case with Paul, as declared by him to the Corinthian church: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." (1 Cor. xiii. 11.)

"Thy people willing in the day of THY power!" is God's word and God's decree.

I can hear of people anxious and frightened that such and such a person should not be saved! afraid that this one and the other should not experience salvation by Christ's blood. But there is no doubt, no uncertainty about it—all is settled! all decreed! But say not this is fatalism! God acts on covenant arrangements, and according to his own eternally decreed purpose—and the knowledge of this encourages and animates us with earnest desire and zeal, as preachers of the everlasting gospel. The knowledge in our own hearts that none but "the election of grace" are saved, urges us on to obey the command of my blessed Master—a command as positive to me now as it was in the apostolic age,—*"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"*—mark the emphatic word of command! *"PREACH the gospel to EVERY creature"*—that is, proclaim, declare, make it known to all, wherever we may "go"—but OFFER it to none. Ministers must preach it! It is the Holy Ghost alone who can, and who does, and who will apply it in and to the hearts of his own prepared people!

This is a most important distinction, and essential specially in these days! and hence the blessedness of the word, *"Ye shall know the truth."*

Now I have endeavoured to show you what THE TRUTH is in its doctrinal

sense. In John xiv. 6, we have this truth brought before us in a very small compass—"Jesus saith unto him, I am the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Now *there* is the whole truth, and all contained in one little verse, and this simply setting forth that CHRIST is ALL! *This* is the TRUTH which ALL His own people shall know, and knowing shall BELIEVE! Herein is God's sovereignty set forth and declared!

Now my first point has been on the *Doctrine*, showing what TRUTH is. You may say you knew it all before. But ministers of the gospel are also remembrancers! Many of you may know it, but you need *reminding* of it, as Peter says, "to stir you up by putting in remembrance;" and is not *this* a mercy, the being reminded of these important realities? to be brought, by my now stirring you up, to think on what you have not been thinking on, it may be, all day before!—even the grand and the great fact, that there is for the sinner an all-sufficient Saviour in Christ, yea, salvation in HIM, and through HIM, and by HIM for the worst, for the chief of sinners, yea, that "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

Now, the second point in the text is the promise to the Church, "*Ye shall know the TRUTH.*" "All the promises of God in Him are yea and amen, unto the glory of God by us." Is not this an encouraging word to a seeking and inquiring soul? The promise of God to his own children that they "shall know the TRUTH," and understand what the truth is? And is not that a great mercy, my hearers? I am preaching to several who can understand what I say, in the feeling of their own experience, who have been taught the TRUTH as it is in Jesus.

Do you know practically and experimentally that word of Paul to the Corinthian church, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of JESUS CHRIST?" We read in one of the first verses in the Bible, "GOD divided the light from the darkness." He has done it as a God of nature. Has He done it in you and to you as a God of GRACE? Do you know the difference between light and darkness—TRUTH and ERROR? Do you know the difference between real truth and everything that falls short of it? I am purposely pausing that you may think upon WHAT I ask! It won't do to go a great way in truth unless you go the whole way? I should be useless to you in the pulpit if I stopped *at a point*. I should be of no use to you in the ministry of the everlasting gospel if I began with *free grace*, and preached the SAVIOUR up to a certain point, and then at the end preached free will. That won't do. It must be *the truth*, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It must be the unadulterated gospel—the gospel of the grace of God—the only real joy and comfort of a poor broken-hearted sinner's soul." "YE shall know *the truth*;" and I defy sin and Satan, and the whole league of enemies ranged against the church to stop the truth. David says, "The entrance of THY words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple;" and *nothing* can realize this but God's sovereign power. It is then "the word of a King with power;" that only can make a man, a sinful, hell-deserving wretch, understand the mystery of the TRUTH.

But then we see from the text the effect which the truth produces—"and the truth *shall* make you free." And here I must preach to you before I go further, *where* the truth brings a man, or rather where every man is brought before he can experimentally feel the truth fully. Now, I believe that it is an experimental fact, that the first work of the Holy Spirit is to bring the soul into bondage. We prove this by Scripture—"When He is come He

will convince the world of sin," and whenever a man is convinced of sin by the Holy Spirit, there must be contrition for that sin. When we are inwardly convinced of sin there must be sorrow for it, and a desire to get pardon; and *that* shuts us up in bondage till we get free from it. Now, what a blessed promise it is to all such persons, "*Ye shall know the truth,*" and that the effect of that truth shall be, "and the truth shall make you free." My hearers, we grow in the knowledge of these things. Every day we live, every sin we feel, and every exercise we are under teaches us more and more!

Now, observe here, what a nice distinction there is in this: "Knowledge puffeth up:" mere head knowledge puffs up. But when the heart is broken, we know the meaning of the Psalmist's words, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard and saved him out of all his troubles." Now, whenever a child of God is brought to a sense of sin, to feel his guilt, to see his corruptions, to mourn over his own wretched depravity, I defy him to get any peace and any comfort, till he sees his own personal salvation wrought out by the finished work of the SAVIOUR. We have a remarkable statement in the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Listen to me as I read it to you, and mark every word. We have in the first verse of that chapter, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Mark the words, "*no condemnation*;" and as there is "*no condemnation*," to them which are in Him," so also there shall be *no* separation from Him. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" It is love. His love to His people that forms the *firmness* of the bond of union. Do you know — do you believe in the doctrine of union? Have you been melted down under a sense of His boundless love? Has the soul been warmed by it, as the body has to-day felt the overpowering heat of this weather? Have you a hope in a broken heart that you are in union with Christ? that your "life is hid with Christ in God."

Do you know anything of the experience of the apostle, "Who shall separate us (O, that pronoun "us") from the love of Christ?" "Tribulation?" shall that separate us? It tries us, galls us, it makes existence sometimes almost unbearable; it puts us, at times, at our wits end, and makes us "stagger like a drunken man." But there is a little gleam of sunshine amid all the surrounding darkness. The Lord will not leave us to the power of the enemy—"When the enemy cometh in like a flood, the SPIRIT of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him." Do you know anything of a flood? Your own city has lent a liberal hand to assist the distressed sufferers from the recent inundations in France;—but no human aid can assist you when the flood, which I am speaking of, comes upon you. It is the Spirit of the Lord alone that can lift up (as he has done for me, again and again,) an effectual standard against the enemy.

The love of Christ is such that nothing can ever separate; nothing can divorce the Church from Him.

You have lately had a divorce bill brought into the House of Lords; but as regards Christ's church, no divorce can ever take place. "What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Nothing can ever do that. Is the ring on the finger? Is the wedding garment put on? In Solomon's Song, it is written "Thy love is better than wine." But it is only as *He speaks* the word, and *applies* the truth with unction and with power, that we can experience peace and comfort.

It is the truth of the ever living God, that nothing can ever separate "His own elect" from Himself, The Church is for ever one. His love is like Him—

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self, unchangeable, and that "*love* covereth all sins." It is the same love which makes the really poor sinner in the deep pit, and in the hot furnace to cry,—"God be merciful to me a sinner." Do you know what *trouble* is? what *distress* of soul is? what *persecution* is? Have you ever *experimentally* cried, "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where *there* is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying; my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God." If you have ever been in that spot you will know, and well know, that God alone can give the help you need! You cannot be born again without soul agony—

"The needy know
It must be so,—
It is the way."

There is *no* other! When in the deep waters—when in the well nigh overwhelming flood—when sinking, and, as it were, "ready to perish," man cannot help you—ministers cannot assist you—help is in God alone, "I was brought low, and He helped me."

"All my trust on THEE is stay'd,
All my help from THEE I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."

The Christian sees and knows something beyond mere *doctrine* in these realities! He learns *much*, and he learns safely in the school of tribulation, distress, and persecution; troubled we must be, distressed we must be, persecuted we shall be! but, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matt. v. 10, 11, 12.) How many of my hearers now in this Church know what these things mean? "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matt. x. 34, 35, 36.) And those words, "*A man's foes shall be they of his own household*," we may take in a twofold sense, not only as applicable to every carnal and professing member of our families or households, but also as referring to *our own* vile, carnal nature. In that old Adam nature, we have within ourselves (when new born) foes! and hence the conflict between flesh and the spirit. The *old nature* and the *new heart* oppose each other and cause exercise, conflict, a battle within! and hence peace is only realized in Christ as our all! As regards men, Paul's injunction is, "*If it be possible*, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men"—observe, "*if it be possible*"—with some it is quite impossible!—"the friendship of the world is enmity with God!" And as concerns the carnal mind—"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." That carnal mind, the old Adam nature, *never* improves at all; it is always enmity against God; and hence we are made to know something of, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

But now the third point in the text is, the effect and the power of the

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TRUTH,—“the TRUTH shall make you FREE!” Here then, is the liberty—the freedom of the gospel—not that only, but the liberty of the truth known, and realized, and experienced! It has been sweetly and truly said—

“He is the free man whom the TRUTH makes free,
And all are slaves besides.”

What a mercy to have been made to know that IN CHRIST is perfect freedom! and so Paul exhorts the Galatian Church—“Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.” (Gal. v. 1, 2.) That is, as I understand his meaning, if we depend on circumcision or on any mere form or ceremony, duty-faith, or anything of creature doing, all is vain, and profitless. It must be—

“Nothing in my hand I bring.”

“Stand fast in the “LIBERTY!” What a word of command! and when given by the great Captain of our salvation, and ordered into the hearts of His *made willing* people, our bonds are loosed, and we are made free indeed! “For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” (Gal. v. 3, 4.) One word on that expression, “ye are fallen from grace”—that is (mark me) from experiencing the favour, and the blessing, and the enjoyment of the gospel; *not* fallen FINALLY from grace once bestowed. The Church of God in Galatia had fallen into error, fallen away from the profession of the true gospel of free grace! They had been led away by hearing legal, and Arminian preachers; and so Paul rebukes them—“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Gal. iii. 1, 2.) Legal preaching always brings the sinner into bondage, misery, and distress of soul; error will always do this, whereas, “the TRUTH shall make you FREE.” Beware, then, of this!

Now my hearers, when we are tried, when we are exercised, when we are under the dominion of some lust, tempted to some besetting sin, and we feel that if left to ourselves we have no power to escape, the truth coming with power gives liberty, and deliverance, and sets us free! It is thus that we taste, as it were, a something of the graciousness of our God! and get an evidence of our sonship. What a mercy to know something of Christ! of HIS TRUTH! of HIS WORD! It is the poor, and the needy *only* who realize these things! “For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm *against* the wall.” (Isa. xxv. 4.) Observe that wonderful-expression, “When the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm *against* the wall,” so that there can be no escape from that “blast of the terrible!” it beats back again, as it were, with redoubled force and violence—as from the wall.

“Ye *shall* know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Here is the LIBERTY of the gospel, and there is no other gospel. I am preaching here to a large assembly of people, and generally speaking of your state I know nothing. I am drawing, as it were, the gospel bow at a venture. May God aim and drop his arrows into your hearts.

How many amongst you, my hearers, know anything of this great subject

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that I have endeavoured to set before you? What a searching truth it is, that none but the "election of GRACE" can be saved! And I think, I cannot furnish you with a more unmistakeable test, or a more blessed evidence of your being one of the elect, than having a feeling sense of your own exceeding sinfulness. There is something in the gospel when it really enters the heart, that makes a man feel his entire nothingness, and lays him low at the throne of grace, and leads him to use that simple child-like confession of the prodigal, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, father, I have sinned against heaven and before THEE, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Is not that a great criterion test for the people of God?

"The TRUTH shall make you *free*." There is nothing worth living for but the being made to believe experimentally *that* mystery. There may be many before me who know the truth, and value the truth, and will hear nothing preached but the TRUTH; and yet you have not been brought out into the liberty of the gospel, but you shall be. "*Wait upon the Lord*"—I don't say come now, I dare not say so, but I say *wait*. The love of your Father's heart will never fail.

"Love's abyss there's no exploring,
'Tis beyond the seraph's ken;
Prostrate at thy feet adoring,
We revere thy love to men."

The Lord has said that he will cause you to "inherit substance," but you must wait for it, you must wait *His* time; you may not have been waiting eight-and-thirty years at Bethesda's pool. Wait a little longer, and the set time of favour will surely come, and He will give you fresh supplies of faith to bear you up, and hold you up on your journey—He will supply all your need in his own good time; but before you can attain to that, you must know what it is to be in want—in utter want—in want of everything, that He may be your ALL IN ALL.

"I want to know the Saviour's love,
I want to fix my heart above;
I want more GRACE to conquer sin,
I want to feel new life within."

I cannot repeat the whole hymn, but that will show you the nature of the experience. "*I want something!*"

When Christ was on earth, and preaching, He took occasion to illustrate His subjects by things that were passing at the time; and we are living in an age when the whole animus of the country is for liberty. Nothing will satisfy people now, but civil and religious liberty. O! my hearers, how few there are in proportion to the masses of this world's population who long for *that* liberty of which I am preaching; and yet I trust, and believe with all my heart, that there are many here (or else I don't think you would come here,) who long above everything to know for your own selves *that* liberty where-with Christ has made His people *free*; and you are waiting for *this* very thing. O! it is a "token for good" to be waiting for GOD to be gracious. Look, how people will wait to see the most trivial sights;—what a little thing will collect a crowd in the streets of your own London, waiting to see something. Are you waiting to see my Master? what a sweet word for "*his own elect*," to see written upon the page of his own inspired Book, a sight that you and I must one day witness—"When the Son of man shall come in HIS GLORY, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall

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separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." (Matt. xxv. 31, 32, 33.) There will be a division *then*, a separation *there*. In anticipation of that great and thrilling time may the gospel be made discriminating here amongst you to-night. It is the greatest honour to a minister of the gospel,—it stamps the soundness, and truthfulness of his theology, when he makes a *division* in the congregation. "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." "To the one, the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life."

I read in God's word, that when Paul preached, "*some* believed the things which were spoken, and *some* believed not." And I should doubt the genuineness of my own ministry, if you did all now believe me, and, *unless* I had the *same* test afforded me that the apostle had.

May the word of *truth* be with power to God's people here to-night, and the text be exemplified amongst us: "Ye *shall* know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

May God *command* the blessing, for JESUS CHRIST's sake. Amen.

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The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE SYMPATHY OF THE TWO WORLDS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 4, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."—Luke xv. 10.

MAN's heart is never big enough to hold either its joys or its sorrows. You never heard of a man whose heart was exactly full of sorrow; for no sooner is it full, than it overflows. The first prompting of the soul is to tell its sorrow to another. The reason is, that our heart is not large enough to hold our grief; and we need to have another heart to receive a portion thereof. It is even so with our joy. When the heart is full of joy, it always allows its joy to escape. It is like the fountain in the market-place; whenever it is full it runs away in streams, and so soon as it ceases to overflow, you may be quite sure that it has ceased to be full. The only full heart is the overflowing heart. You know this, beloved, you have proved it to be true; for when your soul has been full of joy, you have first called together your own kindred and friends, and you have communicated to them the cause of your gladness; and when those vessels have been full even to the brim, you have been like the woman who borrowed empty vessels of her neighbours, for you have asked each of them to become partakers in your joy, and when the hearts of all your neighbours have been full, you have felt as if they were not large enough, and the whole world has been called upon to join in your praise. You bade the fathomless ocean drink in your joy; you spoke to the trees and bade them clap their hands, while the mountains and hills were invoked by you to break forth into singing; the very stars of heaven seemed to look down upon you, and you bade them sing for you, and all the world was full of music through the music that was in your heart. And, after all, what is man but the great musician of the world? The universe is a great organ with mighty pipes. Space, time, eternity, are like the throats of this great organ; and man, a little creature, puts his fingers on the keys, and wakes the universe to thunders of harmony, stirring up the whole creation to mightiest acclamations of praise. Know ye not that man is God's high priest in the universe? All things else are but the sacrifice; but he is the priest,—carrying in his heart the fire, and in his hand the wood, and in his mouth the two-edged sword of dedication, with which he offers up all things to God.

But I have no doubt, beloved, the thought has sometimes struck us that our praise does not go far enough. We seem as if we dwelt in an isle cut off from the mainland. This world, like a fair planet, swims in a sea of ether unnavigated by mortal ship. We have sometimes thought that surely our praise was confined to the shores of this poor narrow world, that it was impossible for us to pull the

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ropes which might ring the bells of heaven, that we could by no means whatever reach our hands so high as to sweep the celestial chords of angelic harps. We have said to ourselves there is no connection between earth and heaven. A huge black wall divides us. A strait of unnavigable waters shuts us out. Our prayers cannot reach to heaven, neither can our praises affect the celestials. Let us learn from our text how mistaken we are. -We are, after all, however much we seem to be shut out from heaven, and from the great universe, but a province of God's vast united empire, and what is done on earth is known in heaven; what is sung on earth is sung in heaven; and there is a sense in which it is true that the tears of earth are wept again in paradise, and the sorrows of mankind are felt again, even on the throne of the Most High.

My text tells us, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth." It seems as if it showed me a bridge by which I might cross over into eternity. It doth, as it were, exhibit to me, certain magnetic wires which convey the intelligence of what is done here to spirits in another world. It teaches me that there is a real and wonderful connection between this lower world, and that which is beyond the skies, where God dwelleth, in the land of the happy.

We shall talk about that subject a little this morning. My first head will be *the sympathy of the world above with the world below*; the second, *the judgment of the angels*,—they rejoice over repenting sinners; we shall see what is their ground for so doing. The third, will be *a lesson for the saints*; if the angels in heaven rejoice over repenting sinners, so should we.

I. In the first place, our text teaches us THE SYMPATHY OF THE TWO WORLDS. Imagine not, O son of man, that thou art cut off from heaven: for there is a ladder the top whereof doth rest at the foot of the throne of the Almighty, the base whereof is fixed in the lowest place of man's misery! Conceive not that there is a great gulph fixed between thee and the Father, across which his mercy cannot come, and over which thy prayers and faith can never leap. Oh, think not, son of man, that thou dwellest in a storm-girt island, cut off from the continent of eternity. I beseech thee, believe that there is a bridge across that chasm, a road along which feet may travel. This world is not separated, for all creation is but one body. And know thou, O son of man, though thou in this world doth but dwell, as it were on the foot, yet from the feet even to the head, there are nerves and veins that do unite the whole. The same great heart which beats in heaven beats on earth. The love of the *Eternal Father* which cheers the celestial, makes glad the terrestrial too. Rest assured that though the glory of the celestial be one and the glory of the terrestrial be another, yet are they but another in appearance, for after all, they are the same. Oh! list thee, son of man, and thou wilt soon learn that thou art no stranger in a strange land—a houseless Joseph in the land of Egypt, shut out from his Father, and his children, who still remain in the happy paradise of Canaan. No, thy Father loves thee still. There is a connection between thee and him. Strange that though leagues of distance lie between the finite creature and the infinite Creator, yet there are links that unite us both! When a tear is wept by thee, think not thy Father doth not behold; for, "Like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Thy sigh is able to move the heart of Jehovah; thy whisper can incline his ear unto thee; thy prayer can stay his hands; thy faith can move his arm. Oh! think not that God sits on high in an eternal slumber, taking no account of thee. "Shall a mother forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Engraven upon the Father's hand thy name remains; and on his heart recorded there thy person stands. He

thought of thee before the worlds were made; before the channels of the sea were scooped, or the gigantic mountains lifted their heads in the white clouds, he thought of thee. He thinketh on thee still. "I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro in every place, to show himself strong on the behalf of all them that fear him. Thou art not cut off from him. Thou dost move in him; in him thou dost live and have thy being. "He is a very present help in time of trouble."

Remember, again, O heir of immortality, that thou art not only linked to the Godhead, but there is another one in heaven with whom thou hast a strange, yet near connection. In the centre of the throne sits one who is thy brother, allied to thee by blood. *The Son of God*, eternal, equal with his Father, became in the fulness of time the Son of Mary, an infant of a span long. He was, yea is, bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh. Think not that thou art cut off from the celestial world, while he is there; for is he not thy head, and hath he not himself declared that thou art a member of his body, of his flesh and of his bones? Oh, man, thou art not separated from heaven whilst Jesus tells thee—

"I feel at my heart all thy sighs and thy groans,
For thou art most near me, my flesh and my bones,
In all thy distresses, thy Head feels the pain,
They all are most needful, not one is in vain."

Oh, poor, disconsolate mourner, Christ remembers thee every hour. Thy sighs are his sighs; thy groans are his groans; thy prayers are his prayers:—

"He in his measure feels afresh,
What every member bears."

Crucified he is when thou art crucified; he dies when thou diest; thou livest in him, and he lives in thee, and because he lives shalt thou live also: thou shalt rise in him, and thou shalt sit together in the heavenly places with him. Oh, never was husband nearer to his wife, and never head nearer to the members, and never soul nearer to the body of this flesh, than Christ is unto thee, and while it is so, think not that heaven and earth are divided. They are but kindred worlds; two ships moored close to one another, and one short plank of death will enable you to step from one into the other: this ship, all black and coaly, having done the coasting trade, the dusty business of to-day, and being full of the blackness of sorrow; and that ship all golden, with its painted pennon flying, and its sail all spread, white as the down of the sea-bird, fair as the angel's wing—I tell thee, man, the ship of heaven is moored side by side with the ship of earth, and rock though this ship may, and career though she will on stormy winds and tempests, yet the invisible and golden ship of heaven sails by her side never sundered, never divided, always ready, in order that when the hour shall come, thou mayest leap from the black, dark ship, and step upon the golden deck of that thrice happy one in which thou shalt sail for ever.

But, O man of God, there are other golden links besides this which bind the present to the future, and time unto eternity. And what are time and eternity, after all, to the believer, but like the Siamese twins, never to be separated? This earth is heaven below, the next world is but a heaven above; it is the same house—this is the lower room, and that the upper, but the same roof cover both, and the same dew falls upon each. Remember, beloved, that *the spirits of the just*

made perfect are never far from you and me if we are lovers of Jesus. All those who have passed the flood have still communion with us. Do we not sing—

“The saints on earth, and all the dead,
But one communion make;
All join in Christ, the living Head,
And of his grace partake.”

We have but one Head for the church triumphant and for the church militant :

“One army of the living God,
To his command we bow;
Part of the host have cross'd the flood,
And part are crossing now.”

Doth not the apostle tell us that the saints above are a cloud of witnesses? After he had mentioned Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Gideon, and Barak, and Jephthah, did he not say, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight.” Lo, we are running in the plains, and the glorified ones are looking down upon us. Thy mother's eyes follow thee, young man; a father's eyes are looking down upon thee, young woman. The eyes of my godly grandmother, long since glorified, I doubt not, rest on me perpetually. No doubt, in heaven they often talk of us. Methinks they sometimes visit this poor earth—they never go out of heaven, it is true, for heaven is everywhere to them. This world is to them but just one corner of God's heaven, one shady bower of paradise.

The saints of the living God, are, I doubt not, very near unto us, when we think them very far away. At any rate, they still remember us, still look for us; for this is ever upon their hearts—the truth that they without us cannot be made perfect. They cannot be a perfect church till we are gathered in, and therefore do they long for our appearing.

But, to come to our text a little more minutely. It assures us that *the angels* have communion with us. Bright spirits, first-born sons of God, do ye think of me? Oh, cherubim, great and mighty; seraphim, burning, winged with lightning, do ye think of us? Gigantic is your stature. Our poet tells us that the wand of an angel might make a mast for some tall admiral; and doubtless he was right when he said so. Those angels of God are creatures mighty and strong, doing his commandments, hearkening to his word—and do they take notice of us? Let the Scripture answer, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto those that shall be heirs of salvation?” “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him.” “For he shall give his angels charge over thee; to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” Yea, the brightest angels are but the serving men of the saints; they are our lacqueys and our footmen. They wait upon us; they are the troops of our body guard; and we might, if our eyes were opened, see what Elisha saw, horses of fire and chariots of fire round about us; so that we should joyously say, “More are they that are with us than they that are against us.”

Our text tells us that the angels of God rejoice over repenting sinners. How is that? They are always as happy as they can be; how can they be any happier? The text does not say that they are any happier; but perhaps that they show their happiness more. A man may have a Sabbath every day, as he ought to have if he be a Christian; and yet on the first day of the week he will let his Sabbatism come out plainly; for then the world shall see that he doth rest. “A merry heart hath a continual feast;” but then even the merry heart hath some special days on which it feasteth well. To the glorified every day is a Sabbath, but of some it

can be said, "and that Sabbath was an high day." There are days when the angels sing more loudly than usual; they are always harping well God's praise, but sometimes the gathering hosts who have been fitting far through the universe, come home to their centre; and round the throne of God, standing in serried ranks, marshalled not for battle but for music, on certain set and appointed days they chant the praises of the Son of God, "who loved us and gave himself for us." And do you ask me when those days occur? I tell you, the birthday of every Christian is a sonnet day in heaven. There are Christmas-days in paradise, where Christ's high mass is kept, and Christ is glorified not because he was born in a manger, but because he is born in a broken heart. There are days—good days in heaven; days of sonnet, red letter days, of overflowing adoration. And these are days when the shepherd brings home the lost sheep upon his shoulder, when the church has swept her house and found the lost piece of money; for then are these friends and neighbours called together, and they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory over one sinner that repenteth.

I have thus, I hope, shown you that there is a greater connection between earth and heaven than any of us dreamed. And now let none of us think, when we look upward to the blue sky, that we are far from heaven; it is a very little distance from us. When the day comes we shall go post-haste there, even without horses and chariots of fire. Balaam called it a land that is very far off; we know better—it is a land that is very near. Even now

"By faith we join our hands
With those that went before,
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
Upon the eternal shore."

All hail, bright spirits! I see you now. All hail, angels! All hail, ye brethren redeemed! A few more hours, or days, or months, and we shall join your happy throng; till then your joyous fellowship, your sweet compassion shall ever be our comfort and our consolation—and having weathered all storms of life, we shall at last anchor with you within the port of everlasting peace.

II. But the angels are said to sing whenever a sinner repents. Let us see if there is any JUDGMENT in THEIR SONG, or whether they make a mistake. Why do angels sing over penitent sinners?

In the first place, I think it is because they remember the days of creation. You know, when God made this world, and fixed the beams of the heavens in sockets of light, the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy; as they saw star after star flying abroad like sparks from the great anvil of Omnipotence, they began to sing; and every time they saw a new creature made upon this little earth, they praised afresh. When first they saw light they clapped their hands, and said, "Great is Jehovah; for he said 'Light be!' and light was." And when they saw sun and moon, and stars, again they clapped their hands, and they said, "He hath made great lights; for his mercy endureth for ever. The sun to rule the day; for his mercy endureth for ever. The moon to rule the night; for his mercy endureth for ever." And over everything he made, they chanted evermore that sweet song, "Creator, thou art to be magnified; for thy mercy endureth for ever." Now, when they see a sinner returning, they see the creation over again; for repentance is a new creation. No man ever repents until God makes in him a new heart and a right spirit. I do not know that ever since the day when God made the world, with the exception of new hearts, the angels have seen God make anything else. He may, if he hath so pleased, have made fresh worlds since that time. But perhaps the only instance of new creation

they have ever seen since the first day, is the creation of a new heart and a right spirit within the breast of a poor penitent sinner. Therefore do they sing, because creation cometh over again.

I doubt not, too, that they sing because they behold God's works afresh shining in excellence. When God first made the world, he said of it, "It is very good"—he could not say so now. There are many of you that God could not say that of. He would have to say the very reverse. He would have to say, "No, that is very bad, for the trail of the serpent hath swept away thy beauty, that moral excellence which once dwelt in manhood has passed away," but when the sweet influences of the Spirit bring men to repentance and faith again, God looks upon man, and he saith, "It is very good." For what his Spirit makes is like himself—good, and holy, and precious; and God smiles again over his twice-made creation, and saith once more, "It is very good." Then the angels begin again, and praise his name, whose works are always good and full of beauty.

But, beloved, the angels sing over sinners that repent, because they know what that poor sinner has escaped. You and I can never imagine all the depths of hell. Shut out from us by a black veil of darkness, we cannot tell the horrors of that dismal dungeon of lost souls. Happily, the wailings of the damned have never startled us, for a thousand tempests were but a maiden's whisper, compared with one wail of a damned spirit. It is not possible for us to see the tortures of those souls who dwell eternally within an anguish that knows no alleviation. These eyes would become sightless balls of darkness, if they were permitted for an instant to look into that ghastly shrine of torment. Hell is horrible, for we may say of it, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the horrors which God hath prepared for them that hate him. But the angels know better than you or I could guess. They know it; not that they have felt it, but they remember that day when Satan and his angels rebelled against God. They remember the day when the third part of the stars of heaven revolted against their liege Lord; and they have not forgotten how the red right hand of Jehovah Jesus was wrapt in thunder; they do not forget that breach in the battlements of heaven when, down from the greatest heights to the lowest depths, Lucifer and his hosts were hurled; they have never forgotten how, with sound of trumpet, they pursued the flying foe down to the gulphs of black despair; and, as they neared that place where the great serpent is to be bound in chains, they remember how they saw Tophet, which was prepared of old, the pile whereof is wood and much smoke; and they recollect how, when they winged back their flight, every tongue was silent, although they might well have shouted the praise of him who conquered Lucifer; but on them all there did sit a solemn awe of one who could smite a cherubim, and cast him in hopeless bonds of everlasting despair. They knew what hell was, for they had looked within its jaws, and seen their own brothers, fast enclosed within them; and, therefore, when they see a sinner saved, they rejoice, because there is one less to be food for the never-dying worm—one more soul escaped out of the mouth of the lion.

There is yet a better reason. The angels know what the joys of heaven are, and therefore, they rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. We talk about pearly gates and golden streets, and white robes, and harps of gold, and crowns of amaranth, and all that; but if an angel could speak to us of heaven, he would smile and say, "All these fine things are but child's talk, and ye are little children, and ye cannot understand the greatness of eternal bliss, and therefore God has given you a child's horn book, and an alphabet, in which you may learn the first rough letters of what heaven is, but what it is thou dost not know. O mortal, thine eye hath never yet beheld its splendours; thine ear hath never yet been ravished with its melodies; thy heart has never been transported with its peerless joys." Thou mayest talk, and think, and guess, and dream, but thou canst never measure the infinite heaven which God has provided for his children: and therefore it is, when they see a soul saved and a sinner repenting, that they clap their hands; for they know that all those blessed mansions are theirs, since all those sweet places of everlasting happiness are the entail of every sinner that repenteth.

But I want you just to read the text again, while I dwell upon another thought. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that *repenteth*." Now, why do they not save their joy till that sinner dies and goes to heaven? Why do they rejoice over him when he repents? My Arminian friend, I think, ought to

go to heaven, to set them right upon this matter. According to his theory, it must be very wrong of them, because they rejoice prematurely. According to the Arminian doctrine a man may repent, and yet he may be lost; he may have grace to repent and believe, and yet he may fall from grace and be a castaway. Now, angels, don't be too fast. Perhaps you may have to repent of this one day, if the Arminian doctrine be true, I would advise you to save your song for greater joys. Why, angels, perhaps the men that you are singing over to-day, you will have to mourn over to-morrow. I am quite sure that Armibius never taught his doctrine in heaven. I do not know whether he is there—I hope he is, but he is no longer an Arminian; but if he ever taught his doctrine there, he would be put out. The reason why angels rejoice is because they know that when a sinner repents, he is absolutely saved; or else they would rejoice prematurely, and would have good cause for retracting their merriment on some future occasion. But the angels know what Christ meant when he said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand;" and therefore they rejoice over repenting sinners, because they know they are saved.

There is yet one more fact I will mention, before I leave this point. It is said that the angels "rejoice over *one* sinner that repenteth." Now, this evening it shall be my happy privilege to give the right hand of fellowship to no less than forty-eight sinners that have repented, and there will be great joy and rejoicing in our churches to-night, because these forty-eight have been immersed on a profession of their faith. But how loving are the angels to men; for they rejoice over *one* sinner that repenteth. There she is, in that garret where the stars look between the tiles. There is a miserable bed in that room, with but one bit of covering, and she lieth there to die! Poor creature! many a night she has walked the streets in the time of her merriment; but now her joys are over; a foul disease, like a demon, is devouring her heart! She is dying fast, and no one careth for her soul! But there, in that chamber, she turns her face to the wall, and she cries, "O thou that savedst Magdalene, save me; Lord I repent; have mercy upon me; I beseech thee." Did the bells ring in the street? Was the trumpet blown? Ah! no. Did men rejoice? Was there a sound of thanksgiving in the midst of the great congregation? No; no one heard it; for she died unseen. But stay! There was one standing at her bedside, who noted well that tear; an angel, who had come down from heaven to watch over this stray sheep, and mark its return; and no sooner was her prayer uttered than he clapped his wings, and there was seen flying up to the pearly gates a spirit like a star. The heavenly guards came crowding to the gate, crying, "What news, O son of fire?" He said, "'Tis done." "And what is done?" they said, "Why, she has repented." "What! she who was once a chief of sinners? has she turned to Christ?" "'Tis even so," said he. And then they told it through the streets, and the bells of heaven rang marriage peals, for Magdalene was saved, and she who had been the chief of sinners was turned unto the living God.

It was in another place. A poor neglected little boy in ragged clothing had run about the streets for many a-day. Tutored in crime, he was paving his path to the gallows; but one morning he passed by a humble room, where some men and women were sitting together teaching poor ragged children. He stepped in there, a wild Bedouin of the streets; they talked to him; they told him about a soul and about an eternity—things he had never heard before; they spoke of Jesus, and of good tidings of great joy to this poor friendless lad. He went another Sabbath, and another; his wild habits hanging about him, for he could not get rid of them. At last it happened that his teacher said to him one day, "Jesus Christ receiveth sinners." That little boy ran, but not home, for it was but a mockery to call it so—where a drunken father and a lascivious mother kept a hellish riot together. He ran, and under some dry arch, or in some wild unfrequented corner, he bent his little knees, and there he cried, that poor creature in his rags, "Lord save me, or I perish;" and the little Arab was on his knees—the little thief was saved! He said—

"Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly;"

And up from that old arch, from that forsaken hovel, there flew a spirit, glad to bear the new to heaven, that another heir of glory was born to God. I might

picture many such scenes; but will each of you try to picture your own? You remember the occasion when the Lord met with you. Ah! little did you think what a commotion there was in heaven. If the Queen had ordered out all her soldiers, the angels of heaven would not have stopped to notice them; if all the princes of earth had marched in pageant through the streets, with all their robes, and jewellery and crowns, and all their regalia, their chariots, and their horsemen—if the pomps of ancient monarchies had risen from the tomb—if all the might of Babylon and Tyre and Greece had been concentrated into one great parade, yet not an angel would have stopped in his course to smile at those poor tawdry things; but over you the vilest of the vile, the poorest of the poor, the most obscure and unknown—over you angelic wings were hovering, and concerning you it was said on earth and sung in heaven, "Hallelujah, for a child is born to God to-day."

III. And now I must conclude with this LESSON TO THE SAINTS. I think, beloved, it will not be hard for you to learn. The angels of heaven rejoice over sinners that repent; saints of God, will not you and I do the same? I do not think the church rejoices enough. We all grumble enough and groan enough; but very few of us rejoice enough. When we take a large number into the church it is spoken of as a great mercy; but is the greatness of that mercy appreciated? I will tell you who they are that can most appreciate the conversion of sinners. They are those that are just converted themselves, or those that have been great sinners themselves. Those who have been saved themselves from bondage, when they see others coming who have so lately worn the chains, are so glad that they can well take the tabret, and the harp, and the pipe, and the psaltery, and praise God that there are other prisoners who have been emancipated by grace. But there are others who can do this better still, and they are the parents and relations of those who are saved. You have thanked God many times when you have seen a sinner saved; but, mother, did not you thank him most when you saw your son converted? Oh! those holy tears; they are not tears—they are God's diamonds—the tears of a mother's joy, when her son confesses his faith in Jesus. Oh! that glad countenance of the wife, when she sees her husband, long bestial and drunken, at last made into a man and a Christian! Oh! that look of joy which a young Christian gives, when he sees his father converted, who had long oppressed and persecuted him. I was preaching this week for a young minister, and being anxious to know his character, I spoke of him with apparent coolness to an estimable lady of his congregation. In a very few moments she began to warm in his favour. She said, "You must not say anything against him, sir; if you do, it is because you do not know him." "Oh," I said, "I knew him long before you did; he is not much, is he?" "Well," she said, "I must speak well of him, for he has been a blessing to my servants and family." I went out into the street, and saw some men and women standing about; so I said to them, "I must take your minister away." "If you do," they said, "we will follow you all over the world, if you take away a man who has done so much good to our souls." After collecting the testimony of fifteen or sixteen witnesses, I said, "If the man gets such witnesses as these let him go on; the Lord has opened his mouth, and the devil will never be able to shut it." These are the witnesses we want—men who can sing with the angels because their own households are converted to God. I hope it may be so with all of you; and if any of you are yourselves brought to Christ to-day—for he is willing to receive you—you will go out of this place singing, and the angels will sing with you. There shall be joy in earth, and joy in heaven; on earth peace, and glory to God in the highest. The Lord bless you one and all, for Jesus' sake.

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CELESTIAL STRIFE.

A Sermon,

PREACHED ON MONDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 5TH, 1857,

BY THE REV. W. M. PUNSHON,

At Great Queen Street Chapel, London.

"And I saw, and behold a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer."—Rev. vi. 2.

How animating is the sound of war! How easily can it awaken the ardours of the unrenewed and unsanctified heart of man! There is no profession in which he can gain more renown and applause than in the profession of arms. It is the birthplace of what men call glory. Custom has baptised it honourable; it carries with it a pomp and a circumstance of which other professions are destitute; it has nerved the arm of the patriot, it has fired the genius of the painter, it has strung and swept the poet's lyre; nations have bowed before its shrine, and even religion has prostituted herself to bless and consecrate its banners. Yet it must not be forgotten that for the most part human conquerors are just murderers upon a grand scale—mighty butchers of human kind. Their victories are won amidst extermination and havoc; their track is traced in ruin; there is human life upon their laurels; and if they wish to acquire a name, they have got one; let them glory as they can in its possession—the voice of blood proclaims it from the ground, and it is vaunted from earth to heaven by the wallings of orphaned hearts, and by the deep execrations of despair. The sacred writings, however, tell us of one conqueror whose victories were peacefully achieved, whose battles were bloodlessly won; or if his onward march was discoloured by blood, it was his own. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who is thus evidently set forth before us; he who "died the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." In the fulfilment of the various duties connected with the mediatorial office which he had undertaken, he is frequently represented as going out to battle against his adversaries, as routing them by the word of his mouth, and returning in exultation and triumph. Instances of this you will easily and at once remember. Thus, in the forty-fifth psalm, which we read in your hearing to-night, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things." Again, in the eleventh chapter of Luke, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." And yet, again, according to the mysterious apocalypses of the Book of Revelation, "Then shall all make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them." It matters not how numerous or how powerful his enemies may be—alike over the powers of darkness with their legions hosts of foes—alike over the corruptions of the human heart with all its ramifications of depravity—alike over the false systems into which

the corruption has retreated, as into so many garrisons and fortified towns, "a crown is given unto him, and he goeth forth conquering and to conquer."

It is not my intention this evening, and time would forbid it even if we had the desire, to enter into all the details of this interesting and absorbing strife. I should just like for a moment or two to concentrate your attention upon one phase of the conflict—the battle of the old serpent the devil, the great origin of evil, under whose generalship the others are mustered, and to whose commands they submitingly bow. Behold, then, the combat beyond all others important—the combat between Christ and Satan for the human soul, and, as you trace the progress of the fight, remember with encouragement, and say that "He goeth forth conquering, and to conquer." It will be necessary, in order that we have the whole matter before us, that we introduce the cause of strife, the battle, and the victory.

First, as to the cause of strife. You know that when the all comprising benevolence of God found heaven too small for the completion of its vast design, this earth arose in order and in beauty from his forming hands. After by his Spirit he had garnished the heavens, and scattered upon the fair face of nature the labour of his hand and the impress of his feet, as the fairest evidence of divine workmanship, the last and most excellent of his works below, he made man in his own image, after his own likeness. The soul, then, was the property of him by whom it was created, who imparted to it its high and noble faculties, by whom, notwithstanding its defilement, it is still sustained, and from whom proceed the retributions which shall fix its doom for ever. Man was created in possession of that moral purity, that absolute freedom from sin, which constituted of itself assimilation to his Maker's image. And so long as he retained that image, so long was he the divine property, and the divine portion alone. But the moment he sinned, the moment of the perversion of his nature, of the estrangement of his faculties, of the alienation of his heart, he came under a different tenure, and became a vassal of a different lord.

Satan himself, once an inhabitant of the high realms of glory, but hurled from that giddy height for disobedience and pride, was mysteriously permitted to tempt our first parents in the garden, with the full knowledge, on their part, that standing as they did in their representative and public character, if they fell the consequences of that one transgression were entailed upon all their posterity. With the circumstances of the original temptation you are all of course familiar, and the issue of it you have in that one verse in the book of Genesis:—"Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." This tells us of the contravention—the direct contravention, of a known law: a law which God, as the supreme Creator, had a perfect right to institute; a law which man, as a dependent creature, was under binding obligations to obey. It was instituted avowedly as a test of obedience; and this is all that we would condescend to answer to the laboured sarcasms of foolish infidelity. Any wayfaring man, though a fool, can curl his lip and declaim against the insignificance of the act from which such mighty issues sprang; but they forget that the moment the temptation was yielded to, there was in human nature a very incarnation of the devil. Under that demoniacal possession the man was prepared for any infraction, from the eating of the forbidden fruit to the subversion of an almighty throne; and he who under such circumstances would violate a known command, however trifling, would not, if the circumstances had been equal, have shrunk away from the endeavour to scale the battlements of heaven, and pluck the crown of divinity from the very brow of the Eternal. Hence it was, by yielding to the suggestions of the tempter, and to his infamous temptation, that the portals of the palace were flung wide open for the strong man armed to enter, and hither, alas! he came with all his sad and fearful train, enthroning himself upon the heart, setting up his image, as Bunyan hath it, in the market-place of the town of Man-soul: fortifying every avenue, filling every chamber, corrupting every faculty, enervating every inhabitant, and announcing every moment the symbols of his

CELESTIAL STRIFE.

own resolve to grasp and hold it for ever. Here then is in brief the cause of this celestial strife. The soul, a colony of heaven, had been taken, usurped possession of, by the powers of hell, and the effort to restore it to allegiance was the main cause of this celestial war.

Still further to impress you with the weighty causes of the strife, let us remind you for a moment of the character of the government thus by daring usurpation acquired. The dominion which Satan exercises over the human soul is despotic in its character. He is not a monarch, he is an autocrat; he admits no compromise, he brooks no rival, he pours his uncleanness upon every part, and reigns supremely over every power and every faculty of man. True, the man is not always conscious of his slavery—that is one of the cunningest secrets of his power, that he persuades his vassals that they are free, and their offended language to any one who questions the fact is, "We be Abraham's children that were never in bondage to any man." He brands them as his own, and then, content to wear his badge, they may choose their own trappings. He has no uniform. Some of his soldiers are in rags and others in purple, and his very choicest veterans have stolen the livery of heaven. There is not one within the compass of the whole human family who is not subject to his authority, naturally led captive by the devil at his will.

And then, this government of Satan over the human soul, is not only despotic but degrading. Slavery in any form is essentially connected with degradation, and in the case before us the connection must be regarded as the most palpable and emphatic of all. The essence and exaltation of moral dignity are assimilations to the image of God. Whatever recedes from that image must of necessity debase and degrade. Now the course of man's life, as it has been ever since the fall, a course of constant and increasing recession from God, presents a spectacle of moral degradation which is grievous to behold: the whole nature has fallen; the understanding has become darkened and is conversant only with what is contemptible and low; the affections which once soared sublimely upwards now cleave to worldly objects, objects that perish in the using; the passions have become loyal servants of the usurper, and keep their zealous patrol in the courtyard of his palace; the will which once inclined to good, is now fierce and greedy after evil; imagination revels in fondest dalliance with sin for its paramour; and conscience, intoxicated with opiate draughts, and in that intoxication smitten with paralysis, gazes hopelessly upon the desolation; or if at times stirred by the spirit within, it breaks out with a paroxysm and terrifies the man with its thunder, he is persuaded to regard it as the incoherence of some meddling drunkard, or the ravings of some frantic madman. Such is the condition to which the usurpation of the evil one has reduced the human soul. It is first earthly, scraping its affluence or its pleasure together; and then, yet more degrading, there is the transformation that happened to Nebuchadnezzar—the heart of a man is taken out, and the heart of a beast is put in; and then as like grows to like, and as a process of assimilation is constantly going on, it grows into its master's image: the mark of the beast becomes more distinct and palpable, every feature stands confessed of Satan's obscene and loathsome likeness, and there is a living proof of the truth of the scale upon which Scripture has graduated man's increasing degeneracy—"First earthly, then sensual, then devilish." That is a fearful picture is it not? Ah! you see the man, or his bacchanalian orgies, or his midnight prowls, but you do not see the fiend that dogs his steps and goads him to destruction; you see the degradation of the nature that once bore the image of God, but you do not see the jibing mocking demon that is behind; you trace intelligibly enough the infernal brand, but you cannot hear the peals of infernal laughter as the arch-devil, looking down upon the soul that he has stormed, exults in the extremity of the disgrace and glories in the pollution of the fallen.

The government of Satan over the human soul is not only despotic and degrading, but destructive. Sin and punishment are inseparably allied; the powers of darkness, although mysteriously permitted a certain amount of influence, are themselves in punishment, "reserved in chains under darkness

until the judgment of the Great Day." A man who transgresses, since no pardon comes upon the freedom of his will, must necessarily be regarded as wilful; he is under the curses of a violated law, nay, condemned altogether, for "the wrath of God abideth upon him." God will "pour out indignation, and wrath, and tribulation, and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil; upon the Jew first, and also upon the Gentiles," for there is no respect of persons with God. I am speaking to unconverted sinners to-night; to some of refined and delicate sensibility, shocked at the ribaldry of the vulgar, and at the licentiousness of the profane. I tell you there is no respect of persons with God. If you flee not to a high and mighty Redeemer, if you repose not in present reliance upon Christ, for you there remaineth nothing but a death whose bitterest ingredient is that it can never die, but that it has eternity about it, eternity beyond it, and eternity within it, and the curse of God upon it, fretting it and following it for ever.

Thank God, there is a promise of a perfect and delightful deliverance from this thralldom under which man has been groaning. Christ has come down on purpose to deliver and to ransom him, and he goeth forth conquering and to conquer. In the counsels of the eternal Godhead, in foresight of the temptation of Satan and of the thralldom and depravity of man, Christ was induced to work out a counteracting scheme, by which, in the beautiful language of ancient prophecy, the prey of the mighty should be taken away and the lawful captive delivered. The first intimation of this scheme was given just when the first shadow of sin swept over the world. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." From that time there was a continued series of operations, in the good providence of God perpetuated for thousands of years, all tending to the fulfilment of this original promise, and the achievement of this original plan. At last, in the fulness of time—the time by prophet seers foretold, and by believing saints expected—in the fulness of time, the Son of God was incarnated in the nature that had sinned, and then it was that the battle in earnest began.

II. Look, then, at the Divine Saviour, "stronger than the strong man armed," invested with far higher qualifications, and wielding far mightier power. And how is this? He is the babe in Bethlehem, the rejected wanderer, the arraigned rebel, the scourged and spit upon, the Nazarene, the crucified. But these are only voluntary submissions, and in the deepest humiliation there dwelt Omnipotence within. "All power is given unto me both in heaven and in earth," and this power is all enlisted upon the side of salvation and of mercy. It is not the power of the lightning, that blasts while it brightens; it is not the power of the whirlwind, whose track is only known by the carnage and desolation that it leaves behind it; it is the power of the water rill, that drops and drops, and in its dropping melts the most stern and difficult of nature's forces; it is the power of the light—it flows in energetic silence, you cannot hear it as it flows, and yet it permeates and illumines all. He is strong, but he is strong to deliver; he is mighty, but, in his own powerful language, he is "mighty to save." It often happens—it used to do more frequently than it does now—in the history of the strifes of nations, and of the harsh scenes of war, that the interest of spectators was drawn aside from hostile ranks to two courageous champions, who separated themselves from opposing armies for single combat with each other, and the fate of armies appeared to the spectators as nothing compared with who should be the victor in this individual strife. Oh! conceive if it were possible a single combat between the rival princes of light and darkness, the grand, the transcendent, the immeasurable issue of which shall be the ruin or redemption of the human soul! I cannot limn it; I cannot bring it fairly before you; the subject is too mighty: and yet a thought or two may not inaptly illustrate the battle that is now before us.

See, then, the lists are spread; the champions are there. Eager angels crowd around, for they have an interest in the strife, and they are anxious to tune their harps to the anthems of regeneration again. Exulting demons are

there, flushed with high hopes they dare not name, that vaunt of a ruined universe and of a peopled hell. This is no gentle passage at arms; this is no gorgeous tournament, or mimic fight, or holiday review; the destinies of a world of souls are trembling in the balance now—depend for weal or woe upon the issue of this mortal strife.

The first grapple seems to have been in the temptation in the wilderness; for at the commencement of our Saviour's public ministry the enemy endeavoured to tempt the second Adam after the same fashion as he had tempted the first; and when wearied with labour, and exhausted with endurance and suffering from the pangs of hunger and of thirst, he brought before him a similar order of temptation to that which had been successful in the garden of Eden. Ah! but there was a mightier Adam in human flesh this time with whom he had to deal. Grasping the sword of the Spirit, with its trepanning blade, he cut asunder the flimsy sophistries of the tempter's weaving, and the discomfited demon went baffled away; and angels came and ministered unto Jesus—fanned with their ambrosial wings his burning brow, and poured their offices of kindness upon his fatigued and sorrowing soul.

Defeated, but not conquered, the enemy returned to the charge; and the next grapple was in the performance of miracles. It is customary in ordinary warfare, you know, whenever a fortress is taken, for the conqueror to garrison it with some of his own soldiers, and leave some trusty captain in charge. The enemy appears to have acted upon this plan, and in token of his usurped authority over the human race, he caused certain of his servants to enter into the bodies of men. When Christ came into the world they brought unto him those that were grievously vexed with devils. He sat down before some of these Sebastopols of the evil one, and as speaking by that high exorcism, he at once dislodged the intruders; and, as some in moody silence, and others with piteous cries, they rushed out from the places they had agonized, we can trace in their complaining the confession of their defeat—"What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God. Art thou come to torment us before the time?"

The next was the death grapple. And was the champion smitten? Did he bend beneath that felon's stroke? Was there victory at last for the powers of hell? Imagine, if you can, how there would be joy in the breast of the Evil One when the Saviour expired; how he would exult at that victory which had more than recompensed the struggle of four thousand years. Hours roll on; he makes no sign; day and night succeed each other; there is no break upon the slumber—their victory appears complete and final. Shall no one undecieve them? No; let them enjoy their triumph as they may. It were cruel to disturb a dream like that, which will have so terrible an awaking. But we, brethren, with the light of 1800 years streaming down upon that gory field, understand the matter better. He died, of course, for only thus could death be abolished; he was counted with transgressors, of course, for thus only could sin be forgiven; he was made a curse for us, of course, because thus only could he turn the curse into a blessing. Oh! to faith's enlightened sight there is a surpassing glory upon that cross. He was never so kingly as when girt about with that crown of thorns; there was never so much royalty upon that regal brow as when he said, "It is finished," and he died.

There only remains one more grapple, and that was in the rising from the dead and ascension into heaven. It is considered the principal glory of a conqueror, you know, not merely that he repels the aggressive attacks of his enemy, but when he carries the war into that enemy's camp and makes him own himself vanquished in the metropolis of his own empire. This Christ did by concealing himself for a while within the chambers of the grave. We cannot tell you much about the battle, for it was a night attack, it took place in darkness; but we can tell the issue, because on the morning of the third day the sepulchre was empty, and the Redeemer had gone forth into Galilee. This was only like the garnering up of the fruits of the conflict. The cross had settled it. It was finished when he said it was—upon the cross; but this was

a sudden surprise in the camp, when the guards were drawn off, and the soldiers carousing in the flush of fancied victory. By death he had abolished death—him that had the power of death. By his resurrection he spoiled principalities and powers; and then he went up that he might “make a show of them openly.” You can almost follow him as he goes, and as the challenge is given as he rises and nears the gates of the celestial city—“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozra? This—that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength.” And then comes the answer, “I that speak in righteousness and mighty to save.” “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.”

“And through the portals wide outspread
The vast procession pours.”

And on he marches through the shining ranks of the ransomed, until he gets to the throne and points to the captives of his bow and spear and claims his recompense. And “there is silence in heaven;” and there is given unto him “a name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” It is finished. Now he rests from his labours, and now he sheaths his sword, and now he wears his crown.

III. Just a word or two upon the victory that he gained. It was complete, it was benevolent, it was unchanging.

The attack which the Saviour made upon the enemy was such as to tear away the very sources and energies of his power. Mark how each fresh onset, whether from earth or hell, has only enhanced his glory and brightened the conqueror's crown. He vanquished in his own person by dying, and in the person of his followers he has continued to manifest that indestructible energy which was always manifest just when it seemed to be overthrown. Why at the commencement of Christianity would not any one have thought that a breath would annihilate it and exterminate the name of its founder for ever? And there they were—Cæsar on the throne, Herod on the bench, Pilate in the judgment hall, Caiaphas in the temple, priests and soldiers, Jews and Romans, all united together to crush the Galilean, and the Galilean overcame. And so it has been in all ages until now. Persecution has lifted up her head against the truth; war-wolves have lapped up the blood of God's saints, and for a time silenced the witness of confessors, and the testimony of the faithful has gone upwards amid the crackling of faggots, and the ascending flame has been the chariot of fire in which rising Elijahs have mounted to heaven. And not merely is the completeness of this triumph manifested in the aggregate, but in the individual. Not only is every man brought into a salvable state, but every part of every man is redeemed. The poor body is not forgotten: it is taught to cast off the grave clothes and anticipate an everlasting residence in heaven. The mind crouches no longer: it emancipates itself from its vassallage and stands erect in the liberty wherewith Christ made it free. And the whole man who was a while ago an alien, degraded and desolate, a fitting companion of the beasts in his lair, a worthy follower in the serpent's trail, is now “clothed and in his right mind,” careering along in the enterprises of godliness, a fellow citizen with saints and of the household of God.

And then the triumphs of the Saviour are benevolent too.

Tell me not of human glory, it is a prostituted word. Tell me not of Agincourt, and Cressy, and Waterloo, and of the high places of Moloch worship, where men have been alike both priests and victims. One verse of the poet aptly describes them all:—

“Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in beauty's circle proudly gay.
The midnight brought the signal sound of strife;
The morning marshalling in arms; the day

CELESTIAL STRIFE.

Battle's magnificently stern array,
The thunder clouds close o'er it, which, when rent,
The earth is covered quick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
Rider and horse, friend and foe, in one rude burial blent."

But what is it to be seen in the time of the Lord's victory? Plains covered with traces of recent carnage, and of recent havoc. What is there to be heard in the time of the Lord's victory? Orphans wailing the dead; widows bemoaning those that have departed? No, but a voice breathing down a comfortable word to men—"They shall neither hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord." The procession of this conqueror consists of saved souls, and eternity shall consecrate the scene.

And then the triumphs of the Saviour are not only complete and benevolent, but unchanging. The things that are now, are very transitory. The sand of the desert is not more unstable; the chaff of the summer threshing floor is not more helpless on the wind; but the Saviour's triumphs brighten with the lapse of time; their lustre time can tarnish not, nor death itself destroy. Oh! think of the multitude that have been already saved! think of the multitude who went up in the early ages of the Church with its enrichments of blessings; think of those who had been taken off to heaven before they ever had time to sin after the similitude of Adam's transgressions, souls ransomed by the blood of atonement taken from birth under the wing of the quivering cherub right away into the realms of blessedness and rest; think of those from the time of the Saviour's incarnation until now who have passed through death triumphant home; think of the multitudes now upon the earth that are working out their salvation with fear and trembling; think of the still greater multitudes that shall yet press into the Church in the times of its millennial glory, when the gates of it shall not be shut day nor night, because there shall be no chance of shutting them, the people crowd in so fast. Oh! what a jubilee in heaven! Oh! what a gathering of emancipated spirits! Limit the extent of the atonement! Who dares do it? Talk about Christ dying for a few scattered families of the sons of men merely! Why, it is to charge my Saviour with cowardice, and bring a slur upon his conduct in the field. If there be one solitary soul the wide universe through for whom Christ did not die, over that soul death has triumphed—and the conquest of my Saviour is imperfect and incomplete. Oh! he seems to stand in his triumphal chariot, in the very centre of the universe, with exulting heaven before and with tormented hell behind; and there is not an unconquered rebel there, but the glad hallelujahs of the one, and the solemn acquiescences of the other, peal out the universe's anthem, "He is Lord of all."

And now which side are you? Pardon the abruptness of the question, but answer it to your consciences and to your God notwithstanding. Which side are you? There is no neutrality in this war, or if there be one here that intends to preserve a dastardly neutrality, he will get the hottest of the battle, and be exposed to the cross-fire of both sides. Which side are you? Do you belong to the Lord, or to the Lord's enemies? Ask yourselves that question in the sight of God. I never knew, until I looked upon it in this aspect, the force and power of a certain question which the Saviour presented in the days of his flesh. I have admired the capacities of the human soul, that it has a memory that can recall the past, imagination that can penetrate the future; that it has a will that no man can tame, that it has immortality as its heritage. But I see all heaven in earnest there, and all hell in earnest yonder, and the prize of the conflict is one poor human soul; and then I see, as I never saw before, what an intensity of emphasis there is in the awful inquiry, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Brethren, how shall it be with you? "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God;" and the doom of the enemies of God is brought before us in the Bible; "Bring hither those mine enemies that would not I should reign over them, and slay them before me." On which side are you? There is one

passage that I should just like to bring before you which has always appeared to me to be one of the most fearful in the whole compass of the book of God; "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man"—mark it, it does not say when he is driven out, it does not say when he is dispossessed by superior powers, but the awful idea, almost too awful to be entertained, is that there are some people in this world of ours of whom Satan is so sure, that he can leave them for a while, perfectly certain that they will sweep and garnish his house in his absence, and prepare it for seven other spirits more inveterate and cruel:—"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return unto my house." Oh! mockery of that quiet empire! "To my house." The tenancy has not changed; he knows full well there is too much love of the master's service in the heart of the man for that. "I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." Oh! horrible! horrible! Not merely to have Satan as a guest, but to sweep and garnish the house that he may come in, and that he may bring with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. And are you doing that? Is there one in the presence of God to-night to whom this awful passage will apply? Oh! I thank God that I can preach to you a present salvation in the name of Jesus. Be delivered from that bondage of yours, for Christ has come down on purpose that he may deliver, and that he may rescue, and he goeth forth conquering and to conquer. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." There is salvation for you from the power of death, and from the thralldom and ascendancy of besetting sin, and from the grasp of the destroyer. There is salvation for you in Christ Jesus the Lord. Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost of human guilt, to the uttermost of human life, to the uttermost of human time. May God help you, for Christ's sake.

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SERMONS BY THE REV. W. M. PUNSHON:—

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The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE MISSION OF THE SON OF MAN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 11, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—Luke xix. 10.

How fond our Master was of the sweet title, the "Son of Man!" If he had chosen, he might always have spoken of himself as the Son of God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Prince of Peace. He hath a thousand gorgeous titles, resplendent as the throne of heaven; but he careth not to use them: to express his humility and let us see the lowliness of him whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light. He calls not himself the Son of God, but he speaks of himself evermore as the Son of Man who came down from heaven. Let us learn a lesson of humility from our Saviour; let us never court great titles nor proud degrees. What are they, after all, but beggarly distinctions whereby one worm is known from another? He that hath the most of them is a worm still, and is in nature no greater than his fellows. If Jesus called himself the Son of Man, when he had far greater names, let us learn to humble ourselves unto men of low estate, knowing that he that humbleth himself shall in due time be exalted. Methinks, however, there is a sweeter thought than this in that name, Son of Man. It seems to me that Christ loved manhood so much, that he always desired to honour it; and since it is a high honour, and indeed the greatest dignity of manhood, that Jesus Christ was the Son of Man, he is wont to display this name, that he may as it were put rich stars upon the breast of manhood, and put a crown upon its head. *Son of Man*—whenever he said that word he seemed to put a halo round the head of Adam's children. Yet there is perhaps a more lovely thought still. Jesus Christ called himself the Son of Man, because he loved to be a man. It was a great stoop for him to come from heaven and to be incarnate. It was a mighty stoop of condescension when he left the harps of angels and the songs of cherubims to mingle with the vulgar herd of his own creatures. But condescension though it was, he loved it. You will remember that when he became incarnate he did not become so in the dark. When he bringeth forth the only begotten into the world, he saith, "Let all the angels of God worship him." It was told in heaven; it was not done as a dark secret which Jesus Christ would do in the night that none might know it; but all the angels of God were brought to witness the advent of a Saviour a span long, sleeping upon a Virgin's breast, and lying in a manger. And ever afterwards, and even now, he never blushed to confess that he was man; never looked back upon his incarnation with the slightest regret; but always regarded it with a joyous recollection, thinking himself thrice happy that he had ever become the Son of Man. All hail, thou blessed Jesus! we know how much thou lovest our race; we can well understand the greatness of thy mercy towards thy chosen ones, inasmuch as thou art evermore using the sweet name which acknowledges that they are bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh, and thou art one of them, a brother and a near kinsman.

Our text announces as a declaration of our Saviour, that he, the Son of Man, is come to seek and to save that which was lost. In addressing you this morning, I shall simply divide my discourse thus:—First, I shall lay it down as a self-evident truth, that *whatever was the intention of Christ in his coming into the world, that intention most certainly shall never be frustrated*. We shall then, in the second

place, look into the *intention of Christ*, as announced in the text, viz., "to seek and to save that which was lost." Then, in concluding, we shall derive a *word of comfort*, and perhaps one of *warning*, from the intention of our Saviour in coming into the world "to seek and to save that which was lost."

I. You are aware that there has been a very great discussion amongst all Christians about the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is one class of men who believe in what is called *general redemption*, affirming it to be an undoubted truth that Jesus Christ hath shed his blood for every man, and that the intention of Christ in his death was the salvation of men considered as a whole; they have, however, to overlook the fact that in this case Christ's intention would be frustrated in a measure. There are others of us who hold what is called the doctrine of *particular redemption*. We conceive that the blood of Christ was of an infinite value, but that the intention of the death of Christ, never was the salvation of all men; for if Christ had designed the salvation of all men, we hold that all men would have been saved. We believe that the intention of Christ's death is just equal to its effects; and therefore I start this morning by announcing what I regard to be a self-evident truth, that whatever was the intention of Jesus Christ in coming into the world, that intention most certainly shall be fulfilled.

But I shall make use of a few arguments to strengthen this doctrine, although I believe that on the very first announcement it commends itself to every thinking mind.

In the first place, it seems to be *inconsistent with the very idea of God that he should ever intend anything which should not be accomplished*. When I look at man I see him to be a creature so distracted with folly and so devoid of power, that I do not wonder that he often begins to build and is not able to finish; I do not marvel that full often he stops short because he hath not counted the cost: I wonder not, when I think how much there is that is above man's control, that he should sometimes propose but that God should dispose far differently from his proposition. I see man to be the insect of a day, a mere ephemera upon the bay-leaf of existence; and when I see him as a mere drop in the great sea of creation, I do not wonder that when he is ambitious he sometimes fashions in himself great designs which he is unable to accomplish, because the wheels of providence and destiny will often run quite contrary to all the frolic of his will. But when I think of God whose name is, "I am that I am," the self-existent one, in whom we live and move and have our being, who is from everlasting to everlasting, the Almighty God; when I think of him as filling immensity, having all power and strength, knowing all things, having a fullness of wisdom, I cannot associate with such an idea of God the supposition of his ever failing in any of his intentions. It would seem to me that a God who could intend a thing and fail in his intention would be no God, but be a thing like ourselves, perhaps superior in strength, but certainly not entitled to worship. I cannot anyhow think of God of a true and real God like Jehovah, except as a being who wills and it is accomplished, who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast, for ever, settled in heaven. I cannot therefore imagine, since Jesus Christ was the Son of God, that in his atonement and redemption, his real intention and desire can in any way be frustrated. If I were a Socinian and believed Jesus Christ to be a mere man, I could of course imagine, that the result of his redemption would be uncertain; but believing that Jesus Christ was very God of very God, equal and co-eternal with the Father, I dare not, lest I should be guilty of presumption and blasphemy, associate with that name of Jehovah Jesus any suspicion that the design of his death shall remain unaccomplished.

But again, we have before us the fact, that *hitherto, all the works of God have accomplished their purpose*. Whenever God has uttered, by the lips of his servants, a prophecy, it has surely come to pass. The instruments of accomplishing that purpose have often been the most factious and rebellious of men: they had no intention whatever of serving God; they have run contrary to his laws; but you will observe that when they have dashed wildly along, his bit has been still in their mouth and his bridle in their jaws. A great monarch has acted like leviathan in the sea; he hath moved himself wherever he pleased; he hath seemed mighty among the sons of men; all the rest of mankind were as minnows, while he was a huge leviathan; but we discover that God has been overruling his thought, that he has been in his council chamber, that the wildest speculations of his ambition have, after all, been but the fulfilling of Jehovah's stern decrees. Look ye abroad

through all the nations of the earth, and tell me, is there one prophecy of God that hath failed? May he not still say, "Not one of them hath lost her mate?" Every word of God hath certainly been accomplished. The kings of the earth stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break his bands asunder and cast his cords from us. But he that sitteth in the heavens did laugh at them; the Lord did have them in derision. Still he worked his own sovereign will; let them do as they pleased, God was over them all, reigning and ruling evermore. If, then, God's purpose in providence certainly never has been frustrated, am I to imagine that God's purpose in the glorious sacrifice of Jesus Christ shall be null and void? If there be any of you who have arrived at such a contortion of intellect as to conceive that a less work being accomplished, a greater one shall fail, I must leave you to yourselves; with you I could not argue; I should think you incapable of an argument. Surely, if God the Master, the Judge, the King, hath in all things done according to his own pleasure in this lower world, in the mere creation and preservation of men, it is not to be dreamed of for a moment, that when he stoops himself from the highest heaven, to give his own heart's blood for our redemption, he shall in that be foiled. No; though earth and hell be against him, every purpose of Jesus on the cross shall be consummated, and as the price was "finished," so shall the purchase be; as the means were fully provided, so shall the end be accomplished to its utmost jot and tittle.

But again, I invite you to stand at *the foot of the cross*, and take a view of Jesus Christ, and then I will put it to you whether you can imagine that Jesus Christ could in any measure have died in vain. Come, believer, place thyself in the garden of Gethsemane; hide thyself among those dark olives, and listen to yonder man who is in agony. Dost hear those groans? They are the groans of an incarnate God. Dost hear those sighs? They are the sighs of the Son of Man. God over all, blessed for ever. Hearst thou those strong cries, and dost thou see those tears? They are the crying and the tears of him who is equal with his Father, but who condescended to be a man. Rise, for he has risen; Judas has betrayed him and taken him away. Look on that ground. Seest thou those gouts of gore? It is the bloody sweat of the man Christ Jesus. I conjure thee, answer this question. Standing in the garden of Gethsemane, with those blood gouts staining the white frost of that cold midnight, canst thou believe that one of those clots of blood shall fall to the ground and not effect its purpose? I challenge thee, O Christian, whatever thy doctrinal opinions, to say me "Yes" to such a question as that. Canst thou imagine that a sweat of blood from the veins of incarnate Deity shall ever fall to the ground and fail? Why, beloved, the *word* of God which cometh forth out of his mouth shall not return unto him void, but it shall accomplish that which he pleases; how much more shall the Great Word of God, which came forth from the loins of Deity, accomplish the purpose whereunto God hath sent him, and prosper in the thing for which it pleased God to ordain him!

But now come with me to *the hall of judgment*. See there your Master placed in mock state in the midst of a ribald band of soldiery. Do you see how they spit on those blessed cheeks, how they pluck his hair, how they buffet him? Do you see the crown of thorns with its ruby drops of gore? Hark! Can you hear the cry of the multitude, as they say, "Crucify him, crucify him?" And will you now stand there and look at this man whom Pilate has just brought forth, still bleeding from the lash of the scourge, covered with shame, and spitting and mockery; and as this "*Ecce Homo*" is presented to you, will you believe that this, the incarnate Son of God, shall be made such a spectacle to men, to angels, and to devils, and yet fail of his design? Can you imagine that one lash of that whip shall have a fruitless aim? Shall Jesus Christ suffer this shame and spitting, and yet endure what were far worse—a disappointment in the fulfilment of his intentions? No; God forbid! By Gethsemane and Gabbatha, we are pledged to the strong belief that what Christ designed by his death, must certainly be accomplished.

Then again, see him *hanging on his cross*. The nails have pierced his hands and feet, and there in the broiling sun he hangs,—he hangs to die. The mockery has not ceased; still they put out the tongue and wag the head at him; still they taunt him with "If thou be the Son of God come down from the cross." And now his bodily pains increase, while his soul's anguish is terrible even unto death. Christian, canst thou believe that the blood of Christ was shed in vain? Canst thou look at one of those precious drops as it trickles from his head or his hands or his feet, and

canst thou imagine that it shall fall to the ground and perish there? True, the waters may fall from the sea, the sun may grow dim with age, but I never can imagine that the value, the merit, the power of the blood of Jesus ever shall die out, or that its purpose shall be unaccomplished. It seems to me as clear as noonday, that the design of the Saviour's death must certainly be fulfilled, be it what it may.

I might use a hundred other arguments. I might show that every attribute of Christ declares that his purpose must be accomplished. He certainly has love enough to accomplish his design of saving the lost; for he has a love that is bottomless and fathomless, even as the abyss itself. He certainly has no objection to the accomplishment of his own design, for "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." And certainly the Lord cannot fail for want of power, for where we have omnipotence there can be no deficiency of strength. Nor again, can the design be unaccomplished because it was unwise, for God's designs cannot be unwise, simply because they are of God—that is to say—they are of infinite wisdom. I cannot see anything in the character of Christ, nor anything the wide world over, that can for one moment make me imagine that Christ should die, and yet it should be said afterwards, "This man died for a purpose which he never lived to see accomplished: the object of his death was only partially fulfilled; he saw of the travail of his soul, but he was not satisfied, for he did not redeem all whom he intended to redeem."

Now, some persons love the doctrine of universal atonement because they say it so beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for all men; it commends itself, they say, to the instincts of humanity; there is something in it full of joy and beauty. I admit there is; but beauty may be often associated with falsehood. There is much which I might well admire in the theory of universal redemption, but let me just tell you what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on his cross intended to save every man, then he intended to save those who were damned before he died; because if the doctrine be true, that he died for all men, he died for some that were in hell before he came into this world, for doubtless there were myriads there that had been cast away. Once again, if it were Christ's intention to save all men, how deplorably has he been disappointed! for we have his own evidence that there is a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and into that pit must be cast some of the very persons, who according to that theory, were bought with his blood. That seems to me a thousand times more frightful than any of those horrors, which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of particular redemption. To think that my Saviour died for men in hell seems a supposition too horrible for me to imagine: that he was the substitute for the sons of men, and that God having first punished the substitute, punished men again, seems to me to conflict with any idea of justice. That Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of men, and that afterwards those very men should be punished for the sins which Christ had already atoned for, seems to me, to be the most marvellous monstrosity that ever could have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, ay, to the god of the Thugs, or the most diabolical heathen demons. God forbid that we should ever think thus of Jehovah, the just and wise. If Christ has suffered in man's stead, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and save us from all unrighteousness.

II. I have thus started the first thought that the intention of Christ's death cannot be frustrated. And now methinks every one will anxiously listen, and every ear will be attentive, and the question will arise from every heart, "WHAT THEN WAS THE INTENTION OF THE SAVIOUR'S DEATH? AND IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I CAN HAVE A PORTION IN IT?" For whom, then, did the Saviour die—and is there the slightest probability that I have some lot or portion in that great atonement which he has offered? Beloved, my text is the answer to the question—"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Now, our text tells us of two things—first, the subjects of the Saviour's atonement, the lost; and, secondly, the objects of it, he came to seek and save.

I must now endeavour to pick out the objects of the Saviour's atonement. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." Some of you may turn your heads away at once, and conclude that hitherto you have given no evidence that you have any portion in the death of Christ. You are very good sort of people; you never did much that was wrong—perhaps a little now and then; but nothing

particular ever troubles your conscience. You have a notion that you shall certainly enter into the kingdom of heaven, for you are no worse than your neighbours, and if you are not saved, God help other people! for if you do not go to heaven, who will? You are trusting in your own good works, and believing you are righteous. Now let us decide your case at once. Since you are ashamed to put yourselves among those who are lost, I have no Christ to preach to you till you are ready to come and confess that you are lost; for Christ himself tells us, that he came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" and inasmuch as you belong to the righteous, and trust in yourselves that you are good and excellent, you may turn upon your heel and go, for in the blood of Christ there is no portion for men who live and die trusting in their own self-righteousness.

But I may dismiss another part of you. Some of you are saying, "Well, sir, I know I am guilty, but still I am persuaded that by attention to the law of God in future, I shall certainly be able to take away the demerit of my guilt. I intend henceforward to reform, and I believe that by a consistent course of attention to religious ordinances, and by carefully regarding that which is right and wrong between God and man, and man and man, I shall, without doubt, make an atonement for the sins of the past." Ah, my friend, hitherto thou givest me no hope that thou had any portion in the death of Christ. Christ came not to die for men who can save themselves without him. If thou thinkest thou canst save thyself, remember the door of mercy is shut in thy face. Christ came to bring robes from heaven, but not for you who can spin for yourselves. He came to bring bread for the hungry, but he will give none of it to you who can sow and reap, and make bread for yourselves. Christ helps the helpless, but they who can help themselves and have sufficient of their own strength and merit to carry them to heaven, may fight their way there alone, if they can—they shall have no help from him. Whom then did Christ die to save? It is said, he came to save "that which was lost."

Now, you must bear with me while I run over the different ways in which a man may be lost; and then I will conclude by noticing the term as it is used in the proper sense, when we may affirm that Christ died for such. We know that all men are lost in Adam; as soon as we are born into this world, we are lost; when the tiny bark of the infant is launched upon the river of life it is lost; unless Sovereign grace shall stretch forth its hand and save it in infancy, and carry it to heaven, or save it afterwards, when it shall have grown up—that infant is lost. "Behold," saith David, "I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity; in sin did my mother conceive me." "In Adam all die." The fall of Adam was the fall of the human race; then, you and I, and all of us fell down.

Again, we are all lost by practice. No sooner does the child become capable of knowing right and wrong, than you discover that he chooses the evil and abhors the good. Early passions soon break out, like weeds immediately after the shower of rain; speedily the hidden depravity of the heart makes itself manifest, and we grow up to sin, and so we become lost by practice. But mark, a man may be lost in Adam, and lost by practice, and yet not be saved by Christ; but Christ is able to save you; though you be twice lost, his salvation is able to redeem you from death.

Then there be some who go further still. The deadly tree of sin grows taller and taller; some become lost to the church. After having been trained up religiously in our midst, they turn aside, they give up all outward regard to the worship of God, the ministry of the gospel is neglected, the house of prayer is forsaken, and the church tolls its bell and says of such an one, "He is lost to the church." Some go further still; they are lost to society. I have seen many who are dead while they live. We have in the midst of us the harlot and the drunkard, who, like the leper in the camp of Israel, have to be put away, lest the contagion should spread; and those who seek after right are obliged to turn away from them, lest the evil should spread in the midst of the flock. Now there are many who are lost to society whom Jesus Christ came to save, and whom he will save. But a man may be lost to society and may be lost everlastingly; it is no proof that Christ will save him, because he is thus lost, while at the same time it is no proof that he will not save him, for Christ came to save even men who are lost like this. Again, the man may go further, and be lost to the family. We have known those who have become so vile, that even after society has shut them out, a parent has been obliged to shut them out too. That must be a hell of sin indeed which can make a father say to his son, "My son, you shall not want bread while I have any, but I must forbid

you my house, for your brothers and sisters cannot endure your society; I feel you would destroy their souls if I should allow you to associate with them." Now, a man may be lost thus to his own family, and yet sovereign grace will save him. But, mark, a man may be lost to his family and yet not be saved; yea, that may be the increase of his condemnation, that he sinned against a mother's prayers and against a father's exhortations.

Now I will tell you the people whom Christ will save—they are those who are *lost to themselves*. Just imagine a ship at sea passing through a storm: the ship leaks, and the captain tells the passengers he fears they are lost. If they are far away from the shore, and have sprung a leak, they pump with all their might as long as they have any strength remaining; they seek to keep down the devouring element; they still think that they are not quite lost while they have power to use the pumps. At last they see the ship cannot be saved; they give it up for lost, and leap into the boats. The boats are floating for many a-day, full of men who have but little food to eat. "They are lost," we say, "lost out at sea." But they do not think so; they still cherish a hope that perhaps some stray ship may pass that way and pick them up. There is a ship in the horizon; they strain their eyes to look at her; they lift each other up; they wave a flag; they rend their garments to make something which shall attract attention; but she passes away; black night comes, and they are forgotten. At length the very last mouthful of food has been consumed; strength fails them, and they lay down their oars in the boat, and lay themselves down to die. You can imagine then how well they understand the awful meaning of the term—"lost." As long as they had any strength left they felt they were not lost; as long as they could see a sail they felt there was yet hope; while there was yet a mouldy biscuit left, or a drop of water, they did not give up all for lost. Now the biscuit is gone, and the water is gone; now strength has departed, and the oar lies still: they lie down to die by each other's side, mere skeletons; things that should have been dead days ago, if they had died when all enjoyment of life had ceased. Now they know, I say, what it is to be lost, and across the shoreless waters they seem to hear their death-knell pealing forth that awful word, *Lost! lost! lost!* Now, in a spiritual sense, these are the people Christ came to save. Sinner, thou too art condemned. Our Father Adam steered the ship awry and she split upon a rock, and she is filling even to her bulwarks now; and pump as philosophy may, it can never keep the waters of her depravity so low as to prevent the ship from sinking. Seeing that human nature is of itself lost, it hath taken to the boat. She is a fair boat, called the boat of Good Endeavour, and in her you are striving to row with all your might, to reach the shore; but your strength fails you. You say, "Oh, I cannot keep God's law. The more I strive to keep it, the more I find it to be impossible for me to do so. I climb; but the higher I climb the higher is the top above me. When I was in the plains, I thought the mountain was but a moderate hill; but now I seem to have ascended half-way up its steps,—there it is, higher than the clouds, and I cannot discern the summit." However, you gather up your strength, you try again, you row once more, and at last unable to do anything, you lay down your oars, feeling that if you are saved, it cannot be by your own works. Still you have a little hope left. There are a few small pieces of mouldy biscuit remaining. You have heard that by attention to certain ceremonies you may be saved, and you munch your dry biscuit; but at last that fails you, and you find that neither baptism, nor the Lord's supper, nor any other outward rites, can make you clean, for the leprosy lies deep within. That done, you still look out. You are in hopes that there may be a sail coming, and while floating upon that deep of despair, you think you detect in the distance some new dogma, some fresh doctrine that may comfort you. It passes, however, like the wild phantom ship—it is gone, and there you are left at last, with the burning sky of God's vengeance above you, with the deep waters of a bottomless hell beneath you, fire in your heart and emptiness in that ship which once was so full of hope, you lie down despairing, and you cry,—"*Lord save me, or I perish!*" Is that your condition this morning, my friend, or *has* that *ever* been your condition? If so, Christ came into the world to seek and to save you; and you he will save, and no one else. He will save only those who can claim this for their title,—"*Lost;*" who have understood in their own souls what it is to be lost, as to all self-trust, all self-reliance, and all self-hope. I can look back to the time when I knew myself to be lost. I thought that God meant to destroy me. I imagined that because I felt myself to be lost, I was the special victim of

Almighty vengeance; for I said unto the Lord, "Hast thou set me as the target of all thine arrows? Am I a sea or a whale, that thou hast set a mark upon me? Hast thou sewed up mine iniquities in a bag, and sealed my transgressions with a seal. Wilt thou never be gracious? Hast thou made me to be the centre of all sorrow, the chosen one of heaven to be cursed for ever?" Ah! fool that I was! I little knew then, that those who have the curse in themselves are the men whom God will bless—that we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in him who died for us and rose again. Come, I will put the question once again—can you say that you are lost? Was there a time when you travelled with the caravan through this wild wilderness world? Have you left the caravan with your companions, and are you left in the midst of a sea of sand—a hopeless, arid waste? And do you look around you, and see no helper; and do you cast your eyes around and see no trust? Is the death-bird wheeling in the sky, screaming with delight because he hopes soon to feed upon your flesh and bones? Is the water-bottle dry, and doth the bread fail you? Have you consumed the last of your dry dates, and drunk the last of that brackish water from the bottle; and are you now without hope, without trust in yourself; ready to lie down in despair? Hark thee! The Lord thy God loveth thee; Jesus Christ has bought thee with his blood; thou art, thou shalt be his. He has been seeking thee all this time, and he has found thee at last, in the vast howling wilderness, and now he will take thee upon his shoulders, and carry thee to his house rejoicing, and the angels shall be glad over thy salvation. Now, such people must and shall be saved; and this is the description of those whom Jesus Christ came to save. Whom he came to save he will save; you, ye lost ones—lost to all hope and self confidence, shall be saved. Though death and hell should stand in the way, Christ will perform his vow, and accomplish his design.

I shall be very brief in concluding my discourse; but we have now to notice the OBJECTS OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST—he came "to seek and to save that which was lost." I am so glad that these two words are both there, for if they were not, what hope would there be for any of us? The Arminian says Christ came to save those that seek him. Beloved, there is a sense in which that is true; but it is a lie. Christ did come to save those that seek him, but no one ever sought the Lord Jesus Christ, unless the Lord Jesus first sought him. Christ does not leave it to ourselves to seek him, or else it would be left indeed, for so vile is human nature that although heaven be offered, and though hell thunder in our ears, yet there never was and there never will be any man who, unconstrained by sovereign grace, will run in the way of salvation, and so escape from hell and flee to heaven. It is all in vain for me to preach to you, and all in vain for the most earnest exhortations to be addressed to any of you, unless the Holy Spirit shall be pleased to back them up; for man is so infatuated, his disease is one which causes such a madness of the brain, that he refuses the remedy, and puts away from him the healing draught which alone can give him life from the dead. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Let man alone, and with the cross of Christ before him and all hell behind him, he will shut his eyes and prefer to be damned rather than enter into eternal life by the blood of Christ the Lord. Hence Christ came first to seek men, and then to save them. Ah! what a task that is of seeking men! There are some of you to-day on the tops of the mountains of pride, and others of you in the deep glens of despair. Methinks I see the Saviour coming forth to seek you; he finds you to-day in the green pastures of the sanctuary, he comes near to you, and by these hands of mine he seeks to lay hold of you, but no sooner do you discern his approach than you run far away into the wild desert of sin. Perhaps this evening you will be spending the remnant of the Sabbath in profaning God's day. One of you at least I know who will be in the public house as soon as the evening sermon is over, and most probably will go home very late. If Christ intends to save you, he will go to you there; and while you are in that wild waste of sin, he will send some providence after you, and save you there. Away you fly then to the marshes of reformation, and you say, "The shepherd cannot overtake me. I shall be beyond his reach now, I have left off my drunkenness, I have given up my cursing." But he will come to you there, and wade for you ankle deep in your own self-righteousness. And then you will run away again and jump into the deep pit of despair, and there you will say to yourself, "He can never find me here." But I see him coming with that crook of his: he enters the pit, takes you by

the feet, and casts you round his neck, and carries you home rejoicing, saying, "I have found him at last! Wherever he wandered, I sought him, and now I have found him." It is strange what queer places Christ finds some of his people in! I knew one of Christ's sheep who was found out by his Master while committing robbery. I knew another who was found out by Christ, while he was spiting his old mother by reading the Sunday newspaper and making fun of her. Many have been found by Jesus Christ, even in the midst of sin and vanity. I knew a preacher of the Gospel who was converted in a theatre. He was listening to a play, an old-fashioned piece, that ended with a sailor's drinking a glass of gin before he was hung, and he said, "Here's to the prosperity to the British Nation, and the salvation of my immortal soul;" and down went the curtain; and down went my friend too, for he ran home with all his might. Those words, "The salvation of my immortal soul," had struck him to the quick; and he sought the Lord Jesus in his chamber. Many a-day he sought him, and at last he found him to his joy and confidence.

But for the most part Christ finds his people in his own house; but he finds them often in the worst of tempers, in the most hardened conditions; and he softens their hearts, awakens their consciences, subdues their pride, and takes them to himself; but never would they come to him unless he came to them. Sheep go astray, but they do not come back again of themselves. Ask the shepherd whether his sheep come back, and he will tell you, "No, sir; they will wander, but they never return." When you find a sheep that ever came back of himself, then you may hope to find a sinner that will come to Christ of himself. No; it must be sovereign grace that must seek the sinner and bring him home.

And when Christ seeks him he saves him. Having caught him at last, like the ram of old, in the thorns of conviction, he does not take a knife and slay him as the sinner expects, but he takes him by the hand of mercy, and begins to comfort and to save. Oh, ye lost sinners, the Christ who seeks you to-day in the ministry, and who has sought you many a-day by his providence, will save you. He will first find you when you are emptied of self, and then he will save you. When you are stripped he will bring forth the best robe and put it on you. When you are dying he will breathe life into your nostrils. When you feel yourselves condemned he will come and blot out your iniquities like a cloud, and your transgressions like a thick cloud. Fear not, ye hopeless and helpless souls, Christ seeks you to-day, and seeking, he will save you—save you here, save you living, save you dying, save you in time, save you in eternity, and give you, even you, the lost ones, a portion among them that are sanctified. May the Lord now bless these words to your consolation!

III. I shall not stop to say more, as I intended to have done, lest I should weary you. Let me only remind you, that the time is coming when that word "lost" will have a more frightful meaning to you, than it has to-day. In a few more months, some of you, my hearers, will hear the great bell of eternity tolling forth that awful word—lost, lost, lost! The great sepulchres of hell will toll out your doom—lost, lost, lost! and through the shades of eternal misery this shall for ever assail your ear, that you are lost for ever. But if that bell is ringing in your ear to-day, that you are lost, oh, be of good cheer; it is a good thing to be so lost; it is a happy thing to be lost to self, and lost to pride, and lost to carnal hope. Christ will save you. Believe that. Look to him as he hangs upon his cross. One look shall give you comfort. Turn your weeping eyes to him as he bleeds there in misery. He can, he will save you. Believe on him, for he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believeth not must be damned; but whosoever among the lost ones will now cast himself on Christ Jesus, shall find everlasting life through his death and righteousness. May the Lord now gather in his lost sheep, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

The Preacher.

No. XLVIII.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 25, 1857,

BY THE REV. T. DALE, A.M.

(Canon Residentiary,)

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, LONDON.

"And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless."—Matthew xxii. 12.

THE parable from which these words are taken, my brethren, and which most of us, I will hope, have already heard entire in the gospel of the day, has this peculiarity, that while it is in its details, like other parables, symbolic, or teaching by signs, at the time of its delivery it was also parabolical, declaring things to come. As yet, the gospel of the kingdom was preached only to the seed of Abraham; they "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came," that is, the Jews, were the guests originally bidden. By the refusal of those who were first invited, is typified the unwillingness of the great body of the Jews to receive the gospel, even when proclaimed by him who "spake as never man spake." And at this point it is that, though parable does not end, prophecy begins. The despiteful usage of the servants who carried the invitation foreshows the persecution of the early Christians, and more especially the sufferings of that great cloud of witnesses whom in the church's sublime hymn of praise we designate "the noble army of martyrs;" while it must be self-evident to all, that the sending forth the king's armies, the destroying of the murderers, and the burning of their city foreshadows one of the most memorable events in the records of bygone ages, even that crisis of agony and bitter desolation which British India itself cannot parallel, when Jerusalem lay prostrate before the Roman Conqueror, steeped in the blood of her children, and the remorseless enemies left not one stone in her upon another, because she knew not the time of her visitation. From this point, however, another and a happier view developes itself before us, even the calling of the Gentiles, and their incorporation into the universal church, upon a footing of perfect equality with the privileged and at one time the exclusive people of God.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

The command, "Go ye, therefore, into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage," is the same in substance with that which the Lord uttered on the eve of his return to his primal and eternal glory—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" while the gathering of as many guests as the servants of the king could find, both bad and good, is prophetic of the success which should follow the faithful ministry of the Word, and the speedy and complete evangelising of what was then the Roman world. "The wedding was furnished with guests."

Thus far the general scope and tenor of the parable; thus far also the fulfilment of the prophecy. But here the teaching of the Lord becomes not only comprehensive of all, but personal to each. "The king," we further read, "came in to see the guests;" and it was then found that the servants, if not negligent of their duty, had not been found competent to the right performance of it, for they had admitted into the king's palace and banquetting room one who was not arrayed in the wedding garment, one who therefore came into the presence of the sovereign not as a guest duly bidden and qualified, but as an unwarranted and unauthorised intruder. At once the eye of the king detected him amidst the crowd; and although all nations will at last be gathered before the Lord, "every one of us must give account of himself to God." And the voice of the king indignantly demanded of him, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless."

Here, then, and from this point, as I shall now proceed to show, the parable bears immediately and individually upon ourselves, and has a voice for every one here present. It describes our condition, it declares our own duty, it foreshows our own trial, and if we are found unable to abide that trial, it prefigures and predetermines our own eternal destiny. O may God enable us to lay it well to heart, and to derive a lasting profit from its teaching; through Jesus Christ our Lord!

I. First, then, the parable declares our own condition, both nationally and individually. We too have been gleaned by the servants of the great king out of the highways and hedges of the Gentile world. At the period of our Lord's ministry upon earth, the inhabitants of Britain were intellectually and morally what they were supposed in the imperfect state of science to be locally and geographically, as the Roman poet terms them, "the last of human kind." The last have become first. This day is the Scripture fulfilled in our ears. From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same the name of Jehovah is now great among the Gentiles, and in almost every place and region of the habitable globe, through the agency of Britain, is offered unto the Lord the incense of Scriptural prayer and the pure offering of gospel thanksgiving. He has laid bare his mighty arm in the sight of the nations, and "all the ends of the world have seen the salvation of our God." Here, in the Lord's house, now, on the Lord's own day, is the Lord's own word accomplished; and not now and here alone, but it has been accomplished on every one of those past Sabbaths which have gone to bear witness, whether for us or against us, before the judgment-seat of God. Still, however, those who outwardly and ostensibly seem to accept the king's invitation are but a part of the many called.

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Too many are unheeding, though not unconscious of the lesson to be learned from the destruction of the first invited; and too many imitate their contumacy, if not their cruelty, who dwell in this professed metropolis of the Christian world. Among a population, of which no small part is not even nominally Christian, and a very considerable part practically heathen, around this very edifice, and around every other consecrated temple of the living God within this thronged and teeming city, dwell a mixed multitude who, if not actually worshippers of Dagon or of Moloch, of Baal or of Ashtaroth, of Brahma or of Juggernaut, are yet the idolators of their own lusts, the bondsmen of their own passions, the sport of their own vanities, the slaves of their own gold, the vassals now, and hereafter to be the victims of their own intemperance and excess. Of these, however, I speak not now: I have to do here only with you who have entered within, passing over those who are lingering and loitering without. Of yourselves it may be asserted that you at least have heard the invitation; you have accepted it; you have been brought into the king's palace, most of you in unconscious infancy, by the open door of baptism; you have recognized and ratified the obligation by your voluntary attendance in the house of prayer to-day; you thus avow yourselves the soldiers of Christ your captain; you acknowledge yourselves the subjects and the servants of Christ your king; and accordingly, when he is pleased to confer upon you the high privilege of inviting you to become his guests, it is quite clear that with the relation is connected a responsibility, and out of the privilege must arise a duty.

II. This, then, we are next to consider: for the parable having first described our condition and defined our relation to the king, goes on to declare our duty as arising out of it. Our condition is that of subjects, our relation that of guests; and having as subjects obeyed the king's command, and having as guests entered into the king's palace, we are to be habited as guests, and the only proper habit of the guest is that which is termed in the parable the wedding garment. Here, then, in order to the right understanding of our Lord's teaching, we must advert in passing to a remarkable custom of the Eastern nations. It seems that on occasions of great public or religious festivals, whether solemnized by sacrifices in the temple of a god, or celebrated with banquets in the palace of a king, the worshippers in the one case and the guests in the other were to be arrayed with suitable garments—garments which were provided either at the cost of the prince, or, as the case might be, out of the endowments and revenues of the temple. Thus you will recollect that when Jehu proclaimed a solemn assembly to Baal, and summoned all the votaries of the idol to the temple of their god, even from the remotest parts of the realm, so that the house of Baal was filled from one end to the other, he said to him that was over the vestry, "Bring forth vestments to the worshippers of Baal," and numerous as they were, this was no unwonted or unforeseen requisition; "he brought forth vestments for them all." Now, this illustrates the parable. The wedding garments were provided by the king at his own cost; they were not left to be furnished by the guests themselves, who, having been summoned thus unexpectedly from the highways and the hedges, the streets and the lanes, could not be expected to come in gar-

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ments meet and fitting for the royal banquet. Nothing was wanted from them but what might be done in a moment—to pause in the vestibule, and array themselves in the vesture provided by the master of the feast. Hence it is manifest that the appearing at the banquet without a wedding garment must be either an act of great presumption or an act of gross insubordination. It were an act of great presumption for a guest to presume that his own garments, even if unsullied and untorn, were good enough to appear at the banquet of the king; and it were equally an act of gross insubordination to refuse to obey the king's command. Nor will our view of the case be materially changed, if we resolve it into an act of indifference, and disregard of all with whom he had entered into the palace, and with whom he was associated at the board.

The question for ourselves, therefore, is, What are we to understand by the wedding garment? He who appeared without it was, equally with others, an invited guest; but then he knew full well that the condition of the invitation was, that he should array himself in the wedding garment. And just so it is with ourselves. The invitation, "Come in to the marriage," "Enter into the kingdom of heaven," "Lay hold on eternal life," is addressed to all who are made Christ's by the covenant of baptism; but still "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The wedding garment, then, is the influence of the Spirit of God realised within the heart, is the principle of love manifested and reflected in the life by the practice of holiness. Now, it is a primary and essential element of Christian doctrine, that, as our church declares, "we have no power by nature to do good works and such as are acceptable to God." Baptism does not of itself give us this power; it only places us in a condition to attain it by the use of appointed and accredited means. Baptism is the entrance into the palace; it brings us, according to the similitude of the parable, into the wardrobe or repository of the wedding garments; it presents to us the key by which we may open it, if we will; but it does not compel us to take one out and to array ourselves therein, that so we may be made meet to appear in the presence of the king. Baptism imparts both creating and co-operating grace; but it does not exercise a constraining and controlling power. It brings us in by the open door, but it does not bring us through: that is for the wedding garment alone. "No man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord but by the Holy Ghost." So that if the wedding garment be holiness, it is holiness by the Spirit of the Lord, holiness through grace given in answer to prayer, holiness that works by faith and works in love; it is holiness blended with humility, which can appeal to the heart-searching God, when we have left least undone, as one who seeth that we put not our trust in anything that we do—holiness, that takes delight in ascribing all the glory to God, and at the best of times and in the best of acts looks not to the works of righteousness which we have done, but only to the mercy of God in Christ, only to the mediation of the Lord Jesus, by which that mercy is extended to ourselves. Consequently we are to regard our Christian baptism, the highest privilege which man possesses, not only as a sacrament once received, as a seal once impressed, as an acknowledgment once made, as an homage once rendered, but as representing to us our profession, which is to follow Christ, and be made like unto him, that as he died

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and rose again from the dead, so should we who are baptized die from sin and rise again unto holiness. And this "fine linen," this "righteousness of the saints," is a luminous and a resplendent vesture; it shines before men; believers arrayed in it are the light of the world; they walk as children of light, and in them is exemplified, amidst a world that lieth in wickedness and in darkness, the beautiful language of the wisest of mankind—"The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Here, then, comes the all-important question, my brethren—Are *you* arrayed in this wedding garment of holiness? Have *you* this proof of Christ abiding in you by the Spirit which he hath given you? Do you thus, as to the principle of your actions, live in the Spirit, and as to the actions themselves walk in the Spirit?—for this alone is the armour of light, the panoply of proof, in which you can encounter the last enemy with hope to overcome, in which you can abide what the parable goes on to declare the immediate presence of the King, when it shall be manifested in that light which will penetrate through all disguises, and make manifest the counsels of every heart. Oh! never let us forget that the outer darkness into which the guest was cast who lacked the wedding garment was the same with that reserved for those who had repulsed the king's servants with contumely, and rejected his invitation with contempt. There will be no difference in the end between those who altogether refuse to retain God in their knowledge, and those who profess to know him with the service of the lip, but deny him in the tenor of the life.

III. The trial, which we are next to consider as foreshadowed in the parable to each of ourselves, come when and how it may, will verify the solemn words of the prophet Malachi—"Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." Until that trial come, however, as in the banquet, all are mingled together, those that have wedding garments and he that hath none; and for a time, in the terms of the parable, the concourse was so great, or the garment worn by the insubordinate and presumptuous guest bore such a close resemblance to the vestment provided by the king, that the servants of the Lord did not perceive, perhaps did not even suspect the difference. Those who possess the fashion, the partial conformity and recognition and observance of certain external disguises, the mere form of godliness without the power, may pass current with man, who judges by outward appearance, while the eye that pierces and perforates the walls of the whited sepulchre discovers therein but "dead men's bones and all uncleanness." "In the visible church," as one of our Articles teaches us, "the evil is ever mingled with the good;" and as one who is greater than the church hath taught us, "the tares and the wheat grow together unto the time of harvest." The intruder, therefore, for a time is not discovered; Saul is counted as a prophet; Judas is numbered with the apostles; Simon is honoured as a mighty one, and Demas passes for a saint. But only until the king comes in to see the guests. He does indeed behold them even now; for he is at once in every division and compartment of the great palace of the universe. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." But neither the good nor the evil are now conscious, as they will then be, of the present eye of the Lord. Faith knows

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it now indeed ; but sense will fully perceive it then. " Behold he cometh," and then " every eye shall see him," as now every heart is seen by him ; he will " bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart." " Who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth?" " If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?"

My brethren, there is not a worshipper in the Lord's house, there is not a guest at the Lord's table, there is not now, there never has been one, among all the generations of mankind, who could endure that light which no man can approach unto, when the King shall come " to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired of all them that believe." There is none that could endure that light, were it not that the garment in which they shall meet him is one prepared and provided by himself. " We are counted righteous before God only through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, and not through our own works or deservings." His righteousness is imputed to us, and he hath borne the penalty, though pure from the polluting sin. But then to put on Christ, and to be prepared to meet God in judgment, is not the outward concealment and suppression, but the inward subjection and annihilation of sin. The holiness without which no man shall see the Lord is holiness of heart, and the essential part of it is a resolve to abstain from sin, even though the willingness of the spirit be counteracted by the weakness of the flesh. " Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from all iniquity." And what will the trial be to those who are not apparelled thus, who have been wise in their own eyes, and righteous in their own sight, while regarding iniquity in their heart, who have left undone the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, and have thrown over their defiled garments a robe of specious but fictitious white, which possessed no cleansing, healing, purifying properties, and when it is stripped off by the unsparing hand of death will be exhibited and exposed before angels and before men in all their native defilement and deformity? Oh! surely it cannot be too frequently or too earnestly impressed, that the indulgence, the harbourage of any wilful sin, vitiates all the efficacy, sullies all the purity, and will, if persisted in unto the end, forfeit and cancel all the privileges and benefits of Christian baptism; so that as one leak may sink a ship one sin may destroy a soul. Let us, then, look well to our hearts, out of which are " the issues of life;" let us look well to it, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble us, lest any deliberate transgression stain and diminish the purity of the baptismal wedding garment. " If I regard iniquity in my heart," said the psalmist, " the Lord will not hear me;" and how could there be meetness or preparation for heaven without prayer? Let us, then, " lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us;" for we may read the doom of the inconsistent, the undecided, the unholy, the impure, in the indignant question of the king—" Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" And we may infer how justly that sentence was merited from the consternation and confusion of the intruder, shamed into silence by the witness of an accusing conscience—" And he was speechless."

IV. This, then, is the last lesson of the parable, prefiguring and predeter-

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mining the eternal destiny of all who shall be found in the presence of the Great King destitute of the only true wedding garment, the holiness which is by the Spirit of the Lord. What will it then avail to have presented ourselves, as you are now doing, in the courts of the Lord's house, if after having done this, or rather, having seemed to do this, we have but dishonoured him and deceived our own soul by a mere barren lip service, the homage of mere attitudes and prostrations, which appeared to honour him with the bodily exercise, but profited the soul nothing, that tribute, that nobler tribute being withheld which he expressly claimed, and with which alone he will be content, "My son, give me thine heart?" What will it then avail to have cried, "Peace, peace, when there was no peace," to have called Jesus, "Lord, Lord," while we did not the things which he said, drawing nigh to God with the lips, while the heart was far from him? Should we be provided with any answer to the question, "Who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?" Nay, could we find any apology or excuse for having been forgetful hearers only, and not doers of the word? Could the slothful servant plead any exemption from the doom that should involve also the wicked servant? Is it not a sad and fearful truth, that the man who does nothing for his own soul does everything against it—that he who does nothing for it excepting in the church, as though religion were a thing of times and places, does everything against it in the world? Ah! my brethren, the wedding garment is not a garment to be worn or laid aside at pleasure. The king may enter in at any moment, and he who is not then apparelled in the appointed vesture will be as though he had never been arrayed in it at all. But why should it ever be put off? It may be kept just as white and just as pure, just as unsullied and just as undefiled in the world of business as in the sanctuary of the Lord itself. Go where he will, do what he may, the true believer creates around him his own atmosphere, and it is an atmosphere of holiness. "The very toil of the godly is righteous," while "the very ploughing of the wicked is sin." Can we doubt that Paul the tentmaker, earning his daily bread at Corinth by the skill of his hand and the sweat of his brow, was as much an object of interest to the holy angels, and of approval to his Divine Master, as when he was pleading before the tribunal of Areopagus, or imprisoned in the loathsome depths of a noisome dungeon? The apostle's robes were unsullied and unstained, the wedding garment shining and resplendent still. Though the iron had entered into his soul, he was not the less fit to appear as a guest at the banquet of the king of heaven.

Let this, my brethren, be your own conviction in respect to present obligations and present duty. The garment is not kept pure by going out of the world, but by avoiding the pollution that is in it; and of all worshippers in the Lord's house, of all who have knelt this day at the table of the Lord, that man is the most acceptable worshipper, that man is the most worthy communicant, who hath striven during the course of his secular life to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things, to preach the gospel by honesty and integrity in the midst of the world of business, who has been as a light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, and hath borne among them a practical testimony to his Lord and Master Jesus Christ.

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One word more, and I have done. Recollect that the criminal had nothing whatever to say in his defence. "He was speechless." Now, my brethren, you have entered this day into the palace of the Great King, and most assuredly if he should come in to see the guests there is not one amongst this congregation that would escape his eye; no, not if any could seek a hiding place in the lowest depths of the ocean, or in the central caverns of the earth. For all, therefore, there is but one question: Were he to come suddenly, without a note of warning or preparation, as he came to the hundreds of our slaughtered countrymen—if he were to come now to us, in what garment would he find me arrayed? Now, in answering this question, I would say to the veriest worldling here present, tax all your ingenuity in order to impose upon yourself, try all you can in order to be deceived by others, make the powerful simplicity of God's word as weak and as unmeaning as you can—do all that can be done by philosophy and vain deceit to neutralize and thwart the energy of Scripture truth, and then ask, in your own acceptance of the phrase, provided you are not an idiot or a madman, are you possessed of the wedding garment? Are you as holy as, bearing the name of Christ, you yourself think you ought to be, were you your own judge? On your own interpretation of the principles of the Bible, would you pronounce your own acquittal? Would you not rather, in the presence of the Holy One, be speechless, self-accused, self-convicted, self-condemned? My brethren, there is not an honest trifler, a candid worldling here, who would not judge himself as God would judge him, who would not be condemned out of his own mouth. Oh! then, make the inquiry before the king shall enter in. God in his mysterious providence may visit Britain with the pestilence, as he hath visited India with the sword; but in whatever way he may come, oh! leave not the putting on of the wedding garment till the time when you shall require its protection. "Now," when it "is the accepted time," "now," when it "is the day of salvation," draw nigh to him who is ever ready to draw nigh in mercy unto you; and let this be the confession of your lips, and let this be the conviction of the heart—"Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

The New Park Street Pulpit.

A LECTURE FOR LITTLE-FAITH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 18, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."—II Thessalonians i. 3.

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet." Whether we shall praise God or not, is not left to our opinion. Although the commandment saith not, "Thou shalt praise the Lord," yet praise is God's most righteous due; and every man, as a partaker of God's bounty, and especially every Christian, is bound to praise God, as it is meet. It is true, we have no authoritative rubric for daily praise; we have no commandment left on record specially prescribing certain hours of song and thanksgiving; but still the law written upon the heart, teacheth us with divine authority that it is right to praise God; and this unwritten mandate hath as much power and authority about it, as if it had been recorded on the tables of stone, or handed to us from the top of thundering Sinai. The Christian's duty is to praise God. Think not ye who are always mourning that ye are guiltless in that respect; imagine not that ye can discharge your duty to your God without songs of praise. It is your duty to praise him. You are bound by the bonds of his love as long as you live to bless his name. It is meet and comely that you should do so. It is not only a pleasurable exercise, but it is the absolute duty of the Christian life to praise God. This is taught us in the text,—“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet.” Let not your harps then hang upon the willows, ye mourning children of the Lord. It is your duty to strike them and bring forth their loudest music. It is sinful in you to cease from praising God; you are blessed in order that you may bless him; and if you do not praise God you are not bringing forth the fruit, which he as the divine husbandman, may well expect at your hands. Go forth then, ye sons of God, and chant his praise. With every morning's dawn lift up your notes of thanksgiving; and every evening let the setting sun be followed with your song. Girdle the earth with your praises; surround it with an atmosphere of melody, so shall God himself look down from heaven and accept your praises as like in kind, though not equal in degree, to the praises of cherubim and seraphim.

It seems, however, that the apostle Paul in this instance exercised praise not for himself but for others, for the church at Thessalonica. If any of you should in ignorance ask the question why it was that Paul should take so deep an interest in the salvation of these saints, and in their growth in faith, I would remind you, that this is a secret known only to the men who have brought forth and nourished children, and therefore love them. The apostle Paul had founded the church at Thessalonica; most of these people were his spiritual offspring; by the words of his mouth, attended by the power of the Spirit, they had been brought out of darkness into marvellous light; and they who have had spiritual children, who have brought many sons unto God, can tell you that there is an interest felt by a spiritual father, that is not to be equalled even by the tender affection of a mother towards her babe. "Ay," said the apostle, "I have been tender over you as a nursing father;" and in another place he says he had "travailed in birth," for their souls. This is a secret not known to the hireling minister. Only he whom God hath himself ordained and thrust forth into the work, only he who has had his tongue touched with a live coal from off the altar, can tell you what it is to agonize for men's souls before they are converted, and what it is to rejoice with

joy unspeakable, and full of glory, when the travail of their souls is seen in the salvation of God's elect.

And now, beloved, having thus given you two thoughts which seemed to me to arise naturally from the text, I shall repair at once to the object of this morning's discourse. The apostle thanks God that the faith of the Thessalonians had grown exceedingly. Leaving out the rest of the text, I shall direct your attention this morning to the subject of growth in faith. Faith hath degrees.

In the first place, I shall endeavour to notice the *inconveniences of little faith*; secondly, *the means of promoting its growth*; and thirdly, *a certain high attainment, unto which faith will assuredly grow, if we diligently water and cultivate it*.

I. In the first place, **THE INCONVENIENCES OF LITTLE FAITH.** When faith first commences in the soul, it is like a grain of mustard seed, of which the Saviour said it was the least of all seeds; but as God the Holy Spirit is pleased to bedew it with the sacred moisture of his grace, it germinates and grows and begins to spread, until at last it becomes a great tree. To use another figure: when faith commences in the soul it is simply *looking* unto Jesus, and perhaps even then there are so many clouds of doubts, and so much dimness of the eye, that we have need for the light of the Spirit to shine upon the cross before we are able even so much as to see it. When faith grows a little, it rises from looking to Christ to *coming* to Christ. He who stood afar off and looked to the cross by-and-bye plucks up courage, and getting heart to himself, he runneth up to the cross; or perhaps he doth not run, but hath to be drawn before he can so much as creep thither, and even then it is with a limping gait that he draweth nigh to Christ the Saviour. But that done, faith goeth a little farther; it *layeth hold* on Christ; it begins to see him in his excellency, and appropriates him in some degree, conceives him to be a real Christ and a real Saviour, and is convinced of his suitability. And when it hath done as much as that, it goeth further; it leaneth on Christ; it leaneth on its Beloved; casteth all the burden of its cares, sorrows, and griefs upon that blessed shoulder, and permitteth all its sins to be swallowed up in the great red sea of the Saviour's blood. And faith can then go further still; for having seen and ran towards him, and laid hold upon him, and having leaned upon him, faith in the next place puts in a humble, but a sure and *certain claim* to all that Christ is and all that he has wrought; and then, trusting alone in this, appropriating all this to itself, faith mounteth to full assurance; and out of heaven there is no state more rapturous and blessed. But, as I have observed at the beginning, faith is but very small, and there are some Christians who never get out of little faith all the while they are here. You notice in John Bunyan's "*Pilgrim's Progress*," how many Little-faith's he mentions. There is our old friend Ready-to-halt, who went all the way to the celestial city on crutches, but left them when he went into the river Jordan. Then there is little Feeble-mind, who carried his feeble mind with him all the way to the banks of the river and then left it, and ordered it to be buried in a dunghill that none might inherit it. Then there is Mr. Fearing, too, who used to stumble over a straw, and was always frightened if he saw a drop of rain, because he thought the floods of heaven were let loose upon him. And you remember Mr. Despondency and Miss Much-afraid, who were so long locked up in the dungeon of Giant Despair, that they were almost starved to death, and there was little left of them but skin and bone; and poor Mr. Feeble-mind, who had been taken into the cave of Giant Slay-good who was about to eat him, when Great-heart came to his deliverance. John Bunyan was a very wise man. He has put a great many of those characters, in his book, because there are a great many of them. He has not left us with one Mr. Ready-to-halt, but he has given us seven or eight graphic characters because he himself in his own time has been one of them, and he had known many others who had walked in the same path. I doubt not I have a very large congregation this morning of this very class of persons. Now let me notice the inconveniences of little faith.

The first inconvenience of little faith is that *while it is always sure of heaven it very seldom thinks so*. Little-faith is quite as sure of heaven as Great-faith. When Jesus Christ counts up his jewels at the last day he will take to himself the little pearls as well as the great ones. If a diamond be never so small yet it is precious because it is a diamond. So will faith, be it never so little, if it be true faith, Christ will never lose even the smallest jewel of his crown. Little-faith is always sure of heaven, because the name of Little-faith is in the book of eternal life. Little-faith was chosen of God before the foundation of the world. Little-faith was bought with the blood of Christ; ay, and he cost as much as Great-faith. "For every man a

shekel" was the price of redemption. Every man, whether great or small, prince or peasant, had to redeem himself with a shekel. Christ has bought all, both little and great, with the same most precious blood. Little-faith is always sure of heaven, for God has begun the good work in him and he will carry it on. God loves him and he will love him unto the end. God has provided a crown for him, and he will not allow the crown to hang there without a head; he has erected for him a mansion in heaven, and he will not allow the mansion to stand untenanted for ever. Little-faith is always safe, but he very seldom knows it. If you meet him he is sometimes afraid of hell; very often afraid that the wrath of God abideth on him. He will tell you that the country on the other side the flood can never belong to a worm so base as he. Sometimes it is because he feels himself so unworthy, another time it is because the things of God are too good to be true, he says, or he cannot think they can be true to such an one as he is. Sometimes he is afraid he is not elect; another time he fears that he has not been called aright, that he has not come to Christ aright. Another time his fears are that he will not hold on to the end, that he shall not be able to persevere; and if you kill a thousand of his fears he is sure to have another host by to-morrow; for unbelief is one of those things that you cannot destroy. "It hath," saith Bunyan, "as many lives as a cat;" you may kill it over and over again, but still it lives. It is one of those ill weeds that sleep in the soil even after it has been burned, and it only needs a little encouragement to grow again. Now Great-faith is sure of heaven, and he knows it. He climbs Pisgah's top, and views the landscape o'er; he drinks in the mysteries of paradise even before he enters within the pearly gates. He sees the streets that are paved with gold; he beholds the walls of the city, the foundations whereof are of precious stones; he hears the mystic music of the glorified, and begins to smell on earth the perfumes of heaven. But poor Little-faith can scarcely look at the sun; he very seldom sees the light; he gropes in the valley, and while all is safe he always thinks himself unsafe. That is one of the disadvantages of Little-faith.

Another disadvantage is that *Little-faith, while always having grace enough* (for that is Little-faith's promise, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee") *yet never thinks he has grace enough*. He will have quite enough grace to carry him to heaven; and Great-heart won't have any more. The greatest saint, when he entered heaven, found that he went in with an empty wallet: he had eaten his last crust of bread when he got there. The manna ceased when the children of Israel entered into Canaan; they had none to carry with them there: they began to eat the corn of the land when the manna of the wilderness had ceased. But Little-faith is always afraid that he has not grace enough. You see him in trouble. "Oh!" says he, "I shall never be able to hold my head above water." Blessed be God he never can sink. If you see him in prosperity, he is afraid he shall be intoxicated with pride; that he shall turn aside like Balaam. If you meet him attacked by an enemy, he is scarcely able to say three words for himself, and he lets the enemy exact upon him. If you find him fighting the battle of the Lord Jesus Christ he holds his sword tight enough, good man, but he has not much strength in his arm to bring his sword down with might. He can do but little, for he is afraid that God's grace will not be sufficient for him. Great-faith, on the other hand, can shake the world. What cares he about trouble, trial, or duty?

"He that helped him bears him through,
And makes him more than conqueror too."

He would face an army single-handed, if God commanded him; and "with the jaw-bone of an ass, he would slay heaps upon heaps, and thousands of men." There is no fear of his lacking strength. He can do all things, or can bear all sufferings, for his Lord is there. Come what may, his arm is always sufficient for him; he treads down his enemy, and his cry every day is like the shout of Deborah, "O! my soul, thou hast trodden down strength." Little-faith treads down strength too, but he does not know it. He kills his enemies, but has not eye-sight enough to see the slain. He often hits so hard that his foemen retreat, but he thinks they are there still. He conjures up a thousand phantoms, and when he has routed his real enemies, he makes others, and trembles at the phantoms which he has himself made. Little-faith will assuredly find that his garments will not wax old, that his shoes shall be iron and brass, and that as his day is so shall his strength be; but all the way he will be murmuring, because he thinks his garments will grow old, that his feet will be blistered and sore; and he is terrified lest the day should be too heavy for him, and that the evil of the day shall more than counterbalance his grace. Ay, it is an

inconvenient thing to have little faith, for little faith perverts everything into sorrow and grief.

Again, there is a sad inconvenience about Little-faith, namely, that *if Little-faith be sorely tempted to sin, he is apt to fall*. Strong-faith can well content with the enemy. Satan comes along, and says, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." "Nay," we say, "thou canst not give us all these things, for they are ours already." "Nay," says he, "but ye are poor, naked and miserable." "Ay," say we to him, "but still these things are ours, and it is good for us to be poor, good for us to be without earthly goods, or else our Father would give them to us." "Oh," says Satan, "you deceive your-elves; you have no portion in these things; but if you will serve me, then I will make you rich and happy here." Strong-faith says, "Serve thee, thou fiend! Avaunt! Dost thou offer me silver?—behold God giveth me gold. Dost thou say to me, 'I will give thee this if thou disobey?'—fool that thou art! I have a thousand times as great wages for my obedience as thou canst offer for my disobedience." But when Satan meets Little-faith, he says to him, "If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down;" and poor Little-faith is so afraid that he is not a son of God that he is very apt to cast himself down upon the supposition. "There," says Satan, "I will give thee all this if thou wilt disobey." Little-faith says, "I am not quite sure that I am a child of God, that I have a portion among them that are sanctified;" and he is very apt to fall into sin by reason of the littleness of his faith. Yet at the same time I must observe that I have seen some Little-faiths who are far less apt to fall into sin than others. They have been so cautious that they dared not put one foot before the other, because they were afraid they should put it awry: they scarcely even dared to open their lips, but they prayed, "O Lord, open thou my lips;" afraid that they should let a wrong word out, if they were to speak; always alarmed lest they should be falling into sin unconsciously, having a very tender conscience. Well, I like people of this sort. I have sometimes thought that Little-faith holds tighter by Christ than any other. For a man who is very near drowning is sure to clutch the plank all the tighter with the grasp of a drowning man, which tightens and becomes more clenched the more his hope is decreased. Well, beloved, Little-faith may be kept from falling, but this is the fruit of tender conscience and not of little faith. Careful walking is not the result of little faith; it may go with it, and so may keep Little-faith from perishing, but little faith is in itself a dangerous thing, laying us open to innumerable temptations, and taking away very much of our strength to resist them. "The joy of the Lord is your strength;" and if that joy ceases you become weak and very apt to turn aside. Beloved, you who are Little-faiths, I tell you it is inconvenient for you always to remain so; for you have many nights and few days. Your years are like Norwegian years—very long winters and very short summers. You have many howlings, but very little of shouting; you are often playing upon the pipe of mourning, but very seldom sounding the trump of exultation. I would to God you could change your notes a little. Why should the children of a King go mourning all their days? It is not the Lord's will that you should be always sorrowful. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." Oh, ye that have been fasting, anoint your heads and wash your faces, that ye appear not unto men to fast. Oh, ye that are sad in heart, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Therefore rejoice, for ye shall praise him. Say unto yourselves, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the light of my countenance and my God."

II. Having thus noticed the inconveniences and disadvantages of little faith, let me give you a FEW RULES WITH REGARD TO THE WAY OF STRENGTHENING IT. If you would have your little faith grow into great faith, you must *feed it well*. Faith is a feeding grace. It does not ask you to give it the things that are seen, but it does ask you to give it the promise of the things that are not seen, which are eternal. Thou tellest me thou hast little faith. I ask thee whether thou art given to the meditation of God's Word, whether thou hast studied the promises, whether thou art wont to carry one of those sacred things about with thee every day? Dost thou reply, "No?" Then, I tell thee, I do not wonder at thine unbelief. He who deals largely with the promises, will, under grace, very soon find that there is great room for believing them. Get a promise, beloved, every day, and take it with you wherever you go; mark it, learn it, and inwardly digest it. Don't do as some men do—who think it a Christian duty to read a chapter every morning, and they read one as long as your arm without understanding it at all; but take out choice text, and pray the Lord during the day to break it up to your mind.

Do as Luther says: "When I get hold of a promise," says he, "I look upon it as I would a fruit tree. I think—there hang the fruits above my head, and if I would get them I must shake the tree to and fro." So I take a promise and meditate upon it; I shake it to and fro, and sometimes the mellow fruit falls into my hand, at other times the fruit is less ready to fall, but I never leave off till I get it. I shake, shake all the day long; I turn the text over and over again, and at last the pomegranate drop-peth down, and my soul is comforted with apples, for it was sick of love. Do that, Christian. Deal much with the promises; have much commerce with these powders of the merchant: there is a rich perfume in every promise of God; take it, it is as alabaster box, break it by meditation, and the sweet scent of faith shall be shed abroad in your house.

Again, *prove the promise*, and in that way you will get your faith strengthened. When you are at any time placed in distress, take a promise and see whether it is true. Suppose you are very near lacking bread; take this promise, "Thy bread shall be given thee, thy water shall be sure." Rise up in the morning when nothing is in the cupboard, and say, "I will see whether God will keep this promise;" and if he does, do not forget it; set it down in your book; make a mark in your Bible against it. Do as the old woman did, who put T and P against the promise, and told her minister that it meant "tried and proved;" so that when she was again in distress, she could not help believing. Have you been exercised by Satan? There is a promise that says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Take that and prove it, and when you have proved it, make a mark against it, and say, "This I know is true, for I have proved it to be so." There is nothing in the world that can confirm faith like proof. "What I want," said one, "is facts." And so it is with the Christian. What he wants is a fact to make him believe. The older you grow the stronger your faith ought to become, for you have so many more facts with which to buttress your faith, and compel you to believe in God. Only think of a man who has come to be seventy years of age, what a pile of evidence could he accumulate if he kept a note of all God's providential goodness and all his lovingkindness. You do not wonder when you hear a man, the hairs of whose head are white with the sunlight of heaven, get up and say, "These fifty years have I served God, and he has never forsaken me; I can bear willing testimony to his faithfulness; not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord hath promised; all hath come to pass." Now we, who are young beginners, must not expect that our faith will be so strong as it will be in years to come. Every instance of God's love should make us believe him more; and as each promise passes by, and we can see the fulfilment of it at the heels thereof, we must be compelled and constrained to say, that God has kept so many of these promises and will keep them unto the end. But the worst of it is that we forget them all, and so we begin to have grey hairs sprinkled on our heads, and we have no more faith than when we began, because we have forgotten God's repeated answers, and though he has fulfilled the promise we have suffered it to lie buried in forgetfulness.

Another plan I would recommend for the strengthening of your faith, though not so excellent as the last, is to *associate yourselves with Godly and much-tried men*. It is astonishing how young believers will get their faith refreshed by talking with old and advanced Christians. Perhaps you are in great doubt and distress; you run off to an old brother, and you say, "Oh my dear friend, I am afraid I am not a child of God at all, I am in such deep distress; I have had blasphemous thoughts cast into my heart; if I were a child of God I should never feel like that." The old man smiles, and says, "Ah! you have not gone very far on the road to heaven, or else you would know better. Why I am the subject of these thoughts very often. Old as I am, and though I hope I have enjoyed the full assurance for a long time, yet there are seasons when if I could have heaven for a grain of faith, I could not think heaven was mine, for I could not find so much as a grain in me, though it is there." And he will tell you what dangers he has passed, and of the sovereign love that kept him; of the temptations that threatened to enslave him, and of the wisdom that guided his feet; and he will tell you of his own weakness and God's omnipotence; of his own emptiness, and God's fulness; of his own changeableness, and God's immutability; and if after talking with such a man you don't believe surely you are sinful indeed; for "out of the mouth of two witnesses, the whole shall be established," but when there are many such who can bear testimony to God, it would be foul sin indeed if we were to doubt him.

Another way whereby you may obtain increase of faith is to *labour to get as*

much as possible free from self. I have striven with all my might to attain the position of perfect indifference of all men. I have found at times, if I have been much praised in company, and if my heart has given way a little, and I have taken notice of it, and felt pleased, that the very next time I was censured and abused I felt the censure and abuse very keenly, for the very fact that I took the praise rendered meliorable to lay hold upon the censure. So that I have always tried, especially of late, to take no more notice of man's praise than of his censure, but to fix my heart simply upon this—I know that I have a right motive in what I attempt to do; I am conscious that I endeavour to serve God with a single eye to his glory, and therefore it is not for me to take praise from man nor censure, but to stand independently upon the one rock of right doing. Now the same thing will apply to you. Perhaps you find yourself full of virtue and grace one day, and the devil flatters you: "Ah! you are a bright Christian; you might join the church now, you would be quite an honor to it; see how well you are prospering." And unconsciously to yourself you believe the sound of that syren music, and you half believe that really you are growing rich in grace. Well, the next day you find yourself very low indeed in godly matters. Perhaps you fall into some sin, and now the devil says, "Ah! now you are no child of God; look at your sins." Beloved, the only way in which you can maintain your faith is to live above the praise of self and the censure of self; to live simply upon the blood and merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who can say in the midst of all his virtues, "These are but dross and dung; my hope is fixed on nothing less than Jesus Christ's finished sacrifice"—such a man, when sins prevail, will find his faith remain constant, for he will say "I once was full of virtue and then I did not trust in myself, and now I have none still do I trust in my Saviour, for change as I may, he changeth not. If I had to depend on myself in the least degree then it would be up and down, up and down; but since I rely on what Christ has done, since he is the unbuttressed pillar of my hope, then come what may my soul doth rest secure, confident in faith. Faith will never be weak if self be weak, but when self is strong, faith cannot be strong; for self is very much like what the gardener calls the sucker at the bottom of the tree, which never bears fruit but only sucks away the nourishment from the tree itself. Now, self is that sucker which sucks away the nourishment from faith, and you must cut it up or else your faith will always be little faith, and you will have difficulty in maintaining any comfort in your soul.

But, perhaps, the only way in which most men get their faith increased is by *great trouble*. We don't grow strong in faith on sunshiny days. It is only in strong weather that a man gets faith. Faith is not an attainment that droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven; it generally comes in the whirlwind and the storm. Look at the old oaks: how is it that they have become so deeply rooted in the earth? Ask the March winds and they will tell you. It was not the April shower that did it, or the sweet May sunshine, but it was March's rough wind, the blustering month of old Boreas shaking the tree to and fro and causing its roots to bind themselves around the rocks. So must it be with us. We don't make great soldiers in the barracks at home; they must be made amidst flying shot and thundering cannon. We cannot expect to make good sailors on the *Serpentine*; they must be made far away on the deep sea, where the wild winds howl, and the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies. Storms and tempests are the things that make men tough and hardy mariners. They see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep. So with Christians. Great-faith must have great trials. Mr. Great-heart would never have been Mr. Great-heart if he had not once been Mr. Great-trouble. Valiant-for-truth would never have put to flight those foes, and have been so valiant, if the foes had not first attacked him. So with us: we must expect great troubles before we shall attain to much faith.

Then he who would have great faith, must *exercise what he has*. I should not like to-morrow to go and shoe horses, or to make horse shoes on an anvil. I am sure my arm would ache in the first hour with lifting the heavy hammer and banging it down so many times. Whatever the time might be, I should not be able to keep time. The reason why the blacksmith's arm does not tire is, because he is used to it. He has kept at it all day long these many years, till there's an arm for you! He turns up his sleeve and shows you the strong sinew that never tires, so strong has it become by use. Do you want to get your faith strong? Use it. You lazy lie-a-bed Christians, that go up to your churches and chapels, and take your seats, and hear our sermons, and talk about getting good, but never think about doing good; ye that are letting hell fill beneath you, and yet are too idle to stretch out your hands to pluck brands from the eternal burning; ye that

see sin running down your streets, yet can never put so much as your foot to turn or stem the current, I wonder not that you have to complain of the littleness of your faith. It ought to be little; you do but little, and why should God give you more strength than you mean to use. Strong faith must always be an exercised faith; and he that dares not exercise the faith he has shall not have more. "Take away from him the one talent and give it to him that hath, because he did not put it out to usury." In Mr. Whitfield's life, you do not often find him complaining of want of faith; or if he did, it was when he only preached nine times a week; he never complained when he preached sixteen times. Read Grimshaw's life: you do not often find him troubled with despondency when he preached twenty-four times in seven days; it was only when he was growing a little idle and only preached twelve times. Keep always at it, and all at it, and there is not much fear of your faith becoming weak. It is with our faith as with boys in the winter time. There they go round the fire, rubbing and chaffing their hands to keep the blood in circulation, and almost fighting each other to see which shall sit on the fire and get warm. At last the father comes, and says, "Boys, this won't do; you will never get warm by these artificial means; run out and do some work." Then they all go out, and they come in again with a ruddy hue in their cheeks, their hands no longer tingle, and they say, "Well, father, we didn't think it half so warm as it is." So must it be with you: you must set to work if you would have your faith grow strong and warm. True, your works won't save you; but faith without works is dead, frozen to death; but faith with works groweth to a red heat of fervency and to the strength of stability. Go and teach in the Sunday-school, or go and catch seven or eight poor ragged children; go and visit the poor old woman in her hovel; go and see some poor dying creatures in the back streets of our great city, and you will say, "Dear me! how wonderfully my faith is refreshed just by doing something." You have been watering yourself whilst you were watering others.

Now my last advice shall be this—the best way to get your faith strengthened is to have *communion with Christ*. If you commune with Christ, you cannot be unbelieving. When his left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me, I cannot doubt. When my Beloved sits at his table, and he brings me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me is his love, then indeed I do believe. When I feast with him, my unbelief is abashed and hides its head. Speak, ye that have been led in the green pastures, and have been made to lie down by the still waters; ye who have seen his rod and his staff, and hope to see them even when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death; speak, ye that have sat at his feet with Mary, or laid your head upon his bosom with the well-beloved John; have you not found when you have been near to Christ your faith has grown strong, and when you have been far away, then your faith has become weak? It is impossible to look Christ in the face and then doubt him. When you cannot see him, then you doubt him; but if you live in fellowship with him, you are like the ewe lambs of Nathan's parable, for you lie in his bosom, and eat from his table, and drink from his cup. You must believe when your Beloved speaks unto you, and says, "Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away." There is no hesitation then; you must arise from the lowlands of your doubt up to the hills of assurance.

III. And now, in conclusion, there is a CERTAIN HIGH ATTAINMENT TO WHICH FAITH MAY, IF DILIGENTLY CULTIVATED, CERTAINLY ATTAIN. Can a man's faith grow so strong that he will never afterwards doubt at all? I reply, no. He who has the strongest faith will have sorrowful interviews of despondency. I suppose there has scarcely ever been a Christian who has not, at some time or other, had the most painful doubts concerning his acceptance in the Beloved. All God's children will have paroxysms of doubt even though they be usually strong in faith. Again, may a man so cultivate his faith that he may be infallibly sure that he is a child of God—so sure that he has made no mistake—so sure that all the doubts and fears which may be thrust upon him may not be able at that time to get an advantage over him? I answer, yes, decidedly he may. A man may, in this life, be so sure of his acceptance in the Beloved as he is of his own existence. Nay, he not only may, but there are some of us who have enjoyed this precious state and privilege for years; we do not mean for years together—our peace has been interrupted, we have now and then been subjected to doubts; but I have known some—I knew one especially, who said that for thirty years he had enjoyed almost invariably a full sense of his acceptance in Christ. "I have had," he said, "very often a sense of sin, but I have had with that a sense of the power of the blood of Christ; I have now and then for a little time had great despondency, but

still I may say, taking it as a general rule, that for thirty years I have enjoyed the fullest assurance of my acceptance in the Beloved." I trust a large portion of God's people can say that for months and years they have not had to sing,

"Tis a point I long to know."

But they can say, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." I will try to depict the state of the Christian; he may be as poor as poverty can make him, but he is rich; he has no thought with regard to the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. He casts himself upon the providence of God; he believes that he who clothes the lilies, and feeds the ravens, will not allow his children to go starving or barefooted. He has but little concern as to his temporal estate; he folds his arms and floats down the stream of providence singing all the way; whether he float by mud bank, dark, dreary, and noxious, or by palace fair and valley pleasant, he alters not his position; he neither moves nor struggles; he has no will nor wish which way to swim, his only desire being to "lie passive in God's hand, and know no will but his." When the storm flies over his head he finds Christ to be a shelter from the tempest; when the heat is hot he finds Christ to be the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He just casts his anchor down deep into the sea, and when the wind blows, he sleeps; hurricanes may come about his ears, the masts creak, and every timber seems to be strained and every nail to start from its place, but there he sleeps; Christ is at the helm; he says, "My anchor is within the veil, I know it will keep its hold." The earth shakes beneath his feet; but he says, "Though the earth be removed and mountains be cast into the sea, yet will not we fear, for God is our refuge and strength, and a very present help in time of trouble." Ask him about his eternal interests, and he tells you that his only confidence is in Christ, and that die when he may, he knows he shall stand boldly at the last great day clothed in his Saviour's righteousness. He speaks very confidently though never boastingly; though he has no time to dance the giddy dance of presumption, he stands firmly on the rock of confidence. Perhaps you think he is proud—ah! he is a humble man; he lies low before the cross, but not before you; he can look you boldly in the face, and tell you that Christ is able to keep that which he has committed to him. He knows that—

"His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep,
All that his heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep."

And die when he may he can lay his head upon the pillow of the promise, and breathe his life out on the Saviour's breast without a struggle or a murmur, crying—"Victory," in the arms of death; challenging Death to produce his sting, and demanding of the grave its victory. Such is the effect of strong faith; I repeat, the weakest in the world, by diligent cultivation may attain to it. Only seek the refreshing influence of the Divine Spirit, and walk in Christ's commandments, and live near to him; and ye that are dwarfs, like Zaccheus, shall become as giants; the hyssop on the wall shall start up into the dignity of the cedar in Lebanon, and ye that fly before your enemies shall yet be able to chase a thousand, and two of you shall put ten thousand to flight. May the Lord enable his poor little ones so to grow!

As for those of you who have no faith in Christ, let me remind you of one sad thing—namely, that "without faith it is impossible to please God." If thou hast not put thy trust in Christ, then God is angry with thee every day. "If thou turn not he will whet his sword, for he hath bent his bow and made it ready." I beseech thee, cast thyself on Christ; he is worthy of thy trust; there is none other to trust to; he is willing to receive thee; he invites thee; he shed his blood for thee; he intercedes for thee. Believe on him, for thus his promise runs, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Do both of these things. Believe on him, and then profess thy faith in baptism; and the Lord bless thee, and fold thee to the end, and make thee to increase exceedingly in faith, to the glory of God. May the Lord add his blessing!

The New Park Street Pulpit.

EVERYBODY'S SERMON.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 25, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes."—Hosea xii. 10.

WHEN the Lord would win his people Israel from their iniquities, he did not leave a stone unturned, but gave them precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little. He taught them sometimes with a rod in his hand, when he smote them with sore famine and pestilence, and invasion; at other times he sought to win them with bounties, for he multiplied their corn and their wine and their oil, and he laid no famine upon them. But all the teachings of his providence were unavailing, and whilst his hand was stretched out, still they continued to rebel against the Most High. He hewed them by the prophets. He sent them first one, and then another: the golden-mouthed Isaiah was followed by the plaintive Jeremy; while at his heels in quick succession, there followed many far-seeing, thunder-speaking seers. But though prophet followed prophet in quick succession, each of them uttering the burning words of the Most High, yet they would have none of his rebukes, but they hardened their hearts, and went on still in their iniquities. Among the rest of God's agencies for striking their attention and their conscience, was the use of similitudes. The prophets were accustomed not only to preach, but to be themselves as signs and wonders to the people. For instance, Isaiah named his child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, that they might know that the judgment of the Lord was hastening upon them; and this child was ordained to be a sign, "for before the child shall have knowledge to cry, my father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria." On another occasion, the Lord said unto Isaiah, "Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the Lord said, "Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia; so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives young and old, naked and barefoot, to the shame of Egypt." Hosea, the prophet, himself had to teach the people by a similitude. You will notice in the first chapter a most extraordinary similitude. The Lord said to him, "Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms; for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord," and he did so; and the children begotten by this marriage, were made as signs and wonders to the people. As for his first son he was to be called Jezreel, "for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu." As for his daughter, she was to be called Lo-ruhamah, "for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away." Thus by divers significant signs, God made the people think. He made his prophets do strange things, in order that the people might talk about what he had done, and then the meaning which God would have them learn, should come home more powerfully to their consciences, and be the better remembered.

Now it struck me that God is every day preaching to us by similitudes. When Christ was on earth he preached in parables, and, though he is in heaven now, he is preaching in parables to-day. Providence is God's sermon. The things which we see about us are God's thoughts and God's words to us; and if we were but wise there is not a step that we take, which we should not find to be full of mighty instruction. O ye sons of men! God warns you every day by his own word; he speaks to you by the lips of his servants, his ministers; but, besides this, by similitudes he addresses you at every time. He leaves no stone unturned to bring his wandering children to himself, to make the lost sheep of the house of Israel return to the fold. In addressing myself to you this morning, I shall endeavour to show how every day, and every season of the year, in every place, and in every calling which you are made to exercise, God is speaking to you by similitudes.

I. **EVERY DAY** God speaks to you by similitudes. Let us begin with the *early morning*. This morning you awakened and you found yourselves unclothed, and you began to array yourselves in your garments. Did not God, if you would but have heard him, speak to you by a similitude? Did he not as much as say to thee, "Sinner, what wilt it be when thy vain dreams shall have ended, if thou shouldst wake up in eternity to find thyself naked? Wherewithal shalt thou array thyself? If in this life thou dost cast away the wedding garment, the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ, what wilt thou do when the trump of the archangel shall awaken thee from thy clay-cold couch in the grave, when the heavens shall be blazing with lightnings, and the solid pillars of the earth shall quake with the terror of God's thunder? How wilt thou be able to dress thyself then?" Canst thou confront thy Maker without a covering for thy nakedness? Adam dared not, and canst thou attempt it? Will he not affright thee with his terrors? Will he not cast thee to the tormentors that thou mayest be burned up with unquenchable fire, because thou didst forget the clothing of thy soul while thou wast in this place of probation?

Well, you have put on your dress, and you come down to your families, and your children gather round your table for the morning meal. If you have been wise *God has been preaching to you by a similitude then: he seemed to say to thee—*"Sinner, to whom should a child go but to his father? And where should be his resort when he is hungry but to his father's table?" And as you feed your children, if you had an ear to hear, the Lord was speaking to you and saying, "How willingly would I feed you! How would I give you of the bread of heaven and cause you to eat angels' food! But thou hast spent thy money for that which is not bread, and thy labour for that which satisfieth not. Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, let thy soul delight itself in fatness." Did he not stand there as a Father, and say, "Come my child, come to my table. The precious blood of my Son has been shed to be thy drink, and he has given his body to be thy bread. Why wilt thou wander hungry and thirsty? Come to my table, O my child, for I love my children to be there and to feast upon the mercies I have provided."

You left your home and you went to your business. I know not in what calling your time was occupied—of that we will say more before we shall have gathered up the ends of your similitudes this morning—but you spend your time in your work; and surely, beloved, all the time that your fingers were occupied, God was speaking to your heart, if the ears of your soul had not been closed, so that you were heavy and ready to slumber, and could not hear his voice. And when the sun was shining in high heaven, and the hour of noon was reached, mightest thou not have lifted up thine eye and remembered that if thou hadst committed thy soul to God, thy path should have been as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day? Did he not speak to thee and say, "I brought the sun from the darkness of the east; I have guided him and helped him to ascend the slippery steeps of heaven, and now he standeth in his zenith, like a giant that hath run his race, and hath attained his goal. And even so will I do with thee. Commit thy ways unto me and I will make thee full of light, and thy path shall be as brightness, and thy life shall be as the noon-day: thy sun shall not go down by day, but the days of thy mourning shall be ended, for the Lord God shall be thy light, and thy salvation."

And the sun began to set, and the shadows of evening were drawing on, and did not the Lord then remind thee of thy death? Suns have their setting, and men have their graves. When the shadows of the evening were stretched out, and

when the darkness began to gather, did he not say unto thee, "O man, take heed of thine eventide, for the light of the sun shall not endure for ever? There are twelve hours wherein a man shall work, but when they are past there is no work nor device in the night of that grave whither we are all hastening. Work while ye have the light, for the night cometh wherein no man can work. Therefore, whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." Look I say to the sun at his setting, and observe the rainbow hues of glory with which he paints the sky, and mark how he appears to increase his orb as he nears the horizon. O man kneel down and learn this prayer,—“Lord, let my dying be like the setting of the sun; help me, if clouds and darkness are round about me, to light them up with splendour; surround me, O my God, with a greater brightness at my death than I have shown in all my former life. If my death-bed shall be the miserable pallet, and if I expire in some lone cot, yet nevertheless, grant, O Lord, that my poverty may be gilded with the light that thou shalt give me, that I may exhibit the grandeur of a Christian's departure at my dying hour.” God speaketh to thee, O man, by similitude, from the rising to the setting of the sun.

And now, thou hast lit thy candle and thou sittest down; thy children are about thee, and the Lord sends thee a little preacher to preach thee a sermon, if thou wilt hear. It is a little gnat, and it flieeth round and round about thy candle, and delighteth itself in the light thereof, till, dazzled and intoxicated, it begins to singe its wings and burn itself. Thou seekest to put it away, but it dashes into the flame, and having burned itself it can scarcely fan itself through the air again. But as soon as it has recruited its strength again, mad-like it dashes to its death and destruction. Did not the Lord say to thee, “Sinner, thou art doing this also; thou lovest the light of sin; oh! that thou wert wise enough to tremble at the fire of sin, for he who delights in the sparks thereof, must be consumed in the burning!” Did not thy hand seem to be like the hand of thy Almighty, who would put thee away from thine own destruction, and who rebukes and smites thee by his providence, as much as to say to thee, “Poor silly man, be not thine own destruction.” And whilst thou seest perhaps with a little sorrow the death of the foolish insect, might not that forewarn thee of thine awful doom, when, after having been dazzled with the giddy round of this world's joys, thou shalt at last plunge into the eternal burning and lose thy soul, so madly, for nothing but the enjoyments of an hour? Doth not God preach to thee thus?

And now it is time for thee to retire to thy rest. Thy door is bolted, and thou hast fast closed it. Did not that remind thee of that saying, “When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open unto us;’ and he shall answer and say unto you, ‘I know not whence you are?’” In vain shall be your knocking then, when the bars of immutable justice shall have fast closed the gates of mercy on mankind; when the hand of the Almighty Master shall have shut his children within the gates of Paradise, and shall have left the thief and the robber in the cold chilly darkness, the outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Did he not preach to thee by similitude? Even then, when thy finger was on the bolt, might not his finger have been on thy heart?

And at night time thou wast startled. The watchman in the street awoke thee with the cry of the hour of the night, or his tramp along the street. O man, if thou hadst ears to hear, thou mightest have heard in the steady tramp of the policeman the cry, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.” And every sound at midnight that did awaken thee from thy slumber and startle thee upon thy bed, might seem to forewarn thee of that dread tramp of the archangel which shall herald the coming of the Son of Man, in the day he shall judge both the quick and the dead, according to my gospel. O that ye were wise, that ye understood this, for all the day long from dewy morning till the darkness of the eventide, and the thick darkness of midnight, God evermore doth preach to man—he preacheth to him by similitudes.

II. And now we turn the current of our thoughts, and observe that ALL THE YEAR round God doth preach to man by similitudes. It was but a little while ago that we were sowing our seeds in our garden, and scattering the corn over the broad furrows. God had sent the seed time, to remind us that we too are like the ground, and that he is scattering seed in our hearts each day. And did he not say to us, “Take heed, O man, lest thou shouldest be like the highway whereon the seed was

scattered, but the fowls of the air devoured it. Take heed that thou be not like the ground that had its basement on a hard and arid rock, lest this seed should spring up and by-and-bye should wither away when the sun arose, because it had not much depth of earth. And be thou careful, O son of man, that thou art not like the ground where the seed did spring up, but the thorns sprang up and choked it; but be thou like the good ground whereon the seed did fall, and it brought forth fruit, some twenty, some fifty, and some a hundred fold."

We thought, when we were sowing the seed, that we expected one day to see it spring up again. Was there not a lesson for us there? Are not our actions all of them as seeds? Are not our little words like grains of mustard-seed? Is not our daily conversation like a handful of the corn that we scatter over the soil? And ought we not to remember that our words shall live again, that our acts are as immortal as ourselves, that after having laid a little while in the dust to be matured, they shall certainly arise? The black deeds of sin shall bear a dismal harvest of damnation; and the right deeds which God's grace has permitted us to do, shall, through his mercy and not through our merit, bring forth a bounteous harvest in the day when they who sow in tears shall reap in joy. Doth not seed-time preach to thee, O man, and say, "Take heed that thou sowest good seed in thy field."

And when the seed sprang up, and the season had changed, did God cease then to preach? Ah! no. First the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear, had each its homily. And when at last the harvest came, how loud the sermon which it preached to us! It said to us, "O Israel, I have set a harvest for thee. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." If you have an opportunity to journey into the country during the next three weeks, you will, if your heart is rightly attuned, find a marvellous mass of wisdom couched in a cornfield. Why, I could not attempt for a moment to open the mighty mines of golden treasure which are hidden there. Think, beloved, of the joy of the harvest. How does it tell us of the joy of the redeemed, if we, being saved, shall at last be carried like shocks of corn tully ripe into the garner. Look at the ear of corn when it is fully ripe, and see how it dippeth toward the earth! It held its head erect before, but in getting ripe how humble does it become! And how does God speak to the sinner, and tell him, that if he would be fit for the great harvest he must drop his head and cry, "Lord have mercy upon me a sinner." And when we see the weeds spring up amongst wheat, have we not our Master's parable over again of the tares among the wheat; and are we not reminded of the great day of division, when he shall say to the reaper, "Gather first the tares and bind them in bundles, to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." O yellow field of corn, thou preacheest well to me, for thou sayest to me, the minister, "Behold, the fields are ripe already to the harvest. Work thou thyself, and pray thou the Lord of the harvest to send forth more labourers into the harvest." And it preaches well to thee, thou man of years, it tells thee that the sickle of death is sharp, and that thou must soon fall, but it cheers and comforts thee, for it tells thee that the wheat shall be safely housed, and it bids thee hope that thou shalt be carried to thy Master's garner to be his joy and his delight for ever. Hark, then, to the rustling eloquence of the yellow harvest.

In a very little time, my beloved, you will see the birds congregated upon the housetops in great multitudes, and after they have whirled round and round and round, as if they were taking their last sight at Old England, or rehearsing their supplications before they launched away, you will see them, with their leader in advance, speed across the purple sea to live in sunnier climes, while winter's cold hand shall strip their native woods. And doth not God seem to preach to you, sinners, when these birds are taking their flight? Do you not remember how he himself puts it? "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord." Doth he not tell us that there is a time of dark winter coming upon this world; a time of trouble, such as there has been none like it, neither shall be any more; a time, when all the joys of sin shall be nipped and frost-bitten, and when the summer of man's estate shall be turned into the dark winter of his disappointment? And does he not say to you, "Sinner! fly away—away—away to the goodly

land, where Jesus dwells! Away from self and sin! Away from the city of destruction! Away from the whirl of pleasures, and from the tossing to and fro of trouble! Haste thee, like a bird to its rest! Fly thou across the sea of repentance and faith, and build thy nest in the land of mercy, that when the great day of vengeance shall pass o'er this world, thou mayest be safe in the clefts of the rock."

I remember well, how once God preached to me by a similitude in the depth of winter. The earth had been black, and there was scarcely a green thing or a flower to be seen. As you looked across the field, there was nothing but blackness—bare hedges and leafless trees, and black, black earth, wherever you looked. On a sudden God spake, and unlocked the treasures of the snow, and white flakes descended until there was no blackness to be seen, and all was one sheet of dazzling whiteness. It was at that time that I was seeking the Saviour, and it was then I found him; and I remember well that sermon which I saw before me: "Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than wool." Sinner! thy heart is like that black ground; thy soul is like that black tree and hedgerow, without leaf or blossom; God's grace is like the white snow—it shall fall upon thee till thy doubting heart shall glitter in whiteness of pardon, and thy poor black soul shall be covered with the spotless purity of the Son of God. He seems to say to you, "Sinner, you are black, but I am ready to forgive you; I will wrap thy heart in the ermine of my Son's righteousness, and with my Son's own garments on, thou shalt be holy as the Holy One."

And the wind of to-day, as it comes howling through the trees,—many of which have been swept down,—reminds us of the Spirit of the Lord, which "bloweth where it listeth," and when it pleaseth; and it tells us to seek earnestly after that divine and mysterious influence, which alone can speed us on our voyage to heaven; which shall cast down the trees of our pride, and tear up by the roots the goodly cedars of our self-confidence; which shall shake our refuges of lies about our ears, and make us look to Him who is the only covert from the storm, the only shelter when "the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."

Ay, and when the heat is coming down, and we hide ourselves beneath the shadow of the tree, an angel standeth there, and whispereth, "Look upwards, sinner, as thou hidest thyself from the burning rays of Sol beneath the tree; so there is One who is like the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and he bids thee come and take shadow beneath his branches, for he will screen thee from the eternal vengeance of God, and give thee shelter when the fierce heat of God's anger shall beat upon the heads of wicked men."

III. And now again, EVERY PLACE to which you journey, every animal that you see, every spot you visit, has a sermon for you. Go into your farm-yard, and your ox and your ass shall preach to you. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." The very dog at your heels may rebuke you. He follows his master; a stranger will he not follow, for he knows not the voice of a stranger, but ye forsake your God and turn aside unto your crooked ways. Look at the chicken by the side of yonder pond, and let it rebuke your ingratitude. It drinks, and every sip it takes it lifts its head to heaven and thanks the giver of the rain for the drink afforded to it; while thou eatest and drinkest, and there is no blessing pronounced at thy meals, and no thanksgiving bestowed upon thy Father for his bounty. The very horse is checked by the bridle, and the whip is for the ass; but thy God hath bridled thee by his commandments, and he hath chastened by his providence, yet art thou more obstinate than the ass or the mule; still thou wilt not run in his commandments, but thou turnest aside, wilfully and wickedly following out the perversity of thine own heart. Is it not so? Are not these things true of you? If you are still without God and without Christ, must not these things strike your conscience? Would not any one of them lead you to tremble before the Most High, and beg of him that he would give you a new heart and a right spirit, and that no longer you might be as the beasts of the field, but might be a man full of the Divine Spirit, living in obedience to your Creator.

And in journeying, you have noticed how often the road is rough with stones, and you have murmured because of the way over which you have to tread; and have you not thought that those stones were helping to make the road better, and that the worst piece of road when mended with hard stones would in

time become smooth and fit to travel on? And did you think how often God has mended you; how many stones of affliction he has cast upon you; how many waggon-loads of warnings you have had spread out upon you, and you have been none the better, but have only grown worse; and when he comes to look on you to see whether your life has become smooth, whether the highway of your moral conduct has become more like the king's highway of righteousness, how might he say, "Alas! I have repaired this road, but it is none the better; let it alone until it becomes a very bog and quagmire, until he who keeps it thus ill shall have perished in it himself."

And thou hast gone by the sea-side, and has not the sea talked to thee? Inconstant as the sea art thou, but thou art not one-half so obedient. God keeps the sea, the mountain-waved sea, in check with a belt of sand; he spreads the sand along the sea-shore, and even the sea observe the landmark. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" It is so. Let thy conscience prick thee. The sea obeys Him from shore to shore, and yet thou wilt not have him to be thy God, but thou sayest, "Who is the Lord that I should fear him? Who is Jehovah that I should acknowledge his sway?"

Hear the *mountains* and the *hills*, for they have a lesson. Such is God. He abideth for ever, think not that he shall change.

And now, sinner, I entreat thee to open thine eyes as thou goest home to-day, and if nothing that I have said shall smite thee, perhaps God shall put into thy way something that shall give thee a text, from which thou mayest preach to thyself a sermon that never shall be forgotten. Oh! if I had but time, and thought, and words, I would bring the things that are in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth, and I would set them all before thee, and they should every one give their warning before they had passed from thine inspection, and I know that their voice would be, "Consider the Lord thy Creator, and fear and serve him, for he hath made thee, and thou hast not made thyself;" we obey him, and we find it is our beauty to be obedient, and our glory ever to move according to his will; and thou shalt find it to be the same. Obey him while thou mayest, lest haply when this life is over all these things shall rise up against thee, and the stone in the street shall clamour for thy condemnation, and the beam out of the wall shall bear witness against thee, and the beasts of the field shall be thine accusers, and the valley and hill shall begin to curse thee. O man, the earth is made for thy warning. God would have thee be saved. He hath set hand-posts everywhere in nature and in providence, pointing thee the way to the City of Refuge, and if thou art but wise thou needest not miss thy way; it is but thy wilful ignorance and thy neglect that shall cause thee to run on in the way of error, for God hath made the way straight before thee and given thee every encouragement to run therein.

IV. And now, lest I should weary you, I will just notice that every man in his calling has a sermon preached to him.

The *farmer* has a thousand sermons; I have brought them out already; let him open wide his eye, and he shall see more. He need not go an inch without hearing the songs of angels, and the voice of spirits wooing him to righteousness, for all nature round about him has a tongue given to it, when man hath an ear to hear.

There are others, however, engaged in a business which allows them to see but very little of nature, and yet even there God has provided them with a lesson. There is the *baker* who provides us with our bread. He thrusts his fuel into the oven, and he causeth it to glow with heat, and puts bread therein. Well may he, if he be an ungodly man, tremble as he stands at the oven's mouth, for there is a text which he may well comprehend as he stands there: "For the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; they shall be consumed. Men ingather them in bundles and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Out of the oven's mouth comes a hot and burning warning, and the man's heart might melt like wax within him if he would but regard it.

Then see the *butcher*. How doth the beast speak to him? He sees the lamb almost lick his knife, and the bullock goes unconsciously to the slaughter. How might he think every time that he smites the unconscious animal, (who knows nothing of death),

of his own doom. Are we not, all of us who are without Christ, fattening for the slaughter? Are we not more foolish than the bullock, for doth not the wicked man follow his executioner, and walk after his own destroyer into the very chambers of hell? When we see a drunkard pursuing his drunkenness, or an unchaste man running in the way of licentiousness, is he not as an ox going to the slaughter, until a dart smite him through the liver? Hath not God sharpened his knife and made ready his axe that the fatlings of this earth may be killed, when he shall say to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, "Behold, I have made a feast of vengeance for you, and ye shall feast upon the blood of the slain, and make yourselves drunken with the streams thereof?" Ay, butcher, there is a lecture for you in your trade; and your business may reproach you.

And ye whose craft is to sit still all day, making shoes for our feet, the lapstone in your lap may reproach you, for your heart, perhaps, is as hard as that. Have you not been smitten as often as your lapstone, and yet your heart has never been broken or melted? And what shall the Lord say to you at last, when your stony heart being still within you, he shall condemn you and cast you away because you would have none of his rebukes and would not turn at the voice of his exhortation?

Let the *brewer* remember that as he brews he must drink. Let the *potter* tremble lest he be like a vessel marred upon the wheel. Let the *printer* take heed, that his life be set in heavenly type, and not in the black letter of sin. *Painter*, beware! for paint will not suffice, we must have unvarnished realities.

Others of you are engaged in business where you are continually using scales and measures. Might you not often put yourselves into those scales? Might you not fancy you saw the great Judge standing by with his Gospel in one scale and you in the other, and solemnly looking down upon you, saying, "*Mene, mene, tekel*,—thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting." Some of you use the measure, and when you have measured out, you cut off the portion that your customer requires. Think of your life too, it is to be of a certain length, and every year brings the measure a little farther, and at last there come the scissors that shall clip off your life, and it is done. How knowest thou when thou art come to the last inch? What is that disease thou hast about thee, but the first snip of the scissors? What that trembling in thy bones, that failing in thy eyesight, that fleeing of thy memory, that departure of thy youthful vigour, but the first rent? How soon shalt thou be rent in twain, the remnant of thy days past away, and thy years all numbered and gone, misspent and wasted for ever!

But you say you are engaged as a *servant* and your occupations are diverse. Then diverse are the lectures God preaches to you. "A servant waits for his wages and the hireling fulfilleth his day." There is a similitude for thee, when thou hast fulfilled thy day on earth, and shalt take thy wages at last. Who then is thy master? Art thou serving Satan and the lusts of the flesh, and wilt thou take out thy wages at last in the hot metal of destruction? or art thou serving the fair prince Emmanuel, and shalt thy wages be the golden crowns of heaven? Oh! happy art thou if thou serve a good master, for according to thy master shall be thy reward; as is thy labour such shall the end be.

Or thou art one that *guideth the pen*, and from hour to hour wearily thou writest. Ah! man, know that thy life is a writing. When thy hand is not on the pen, thou art a writer still; thou art always writing upon the pages of eternity; thy sins thou art writing or else thy holy confidence in him that loved thee. Happy shall it be for thee, O writer, if thy name is written in the Lamb's book of life, and if that black writing of thine, in the history of thy pilgrimage below, shall have been blotted out with the red blood of Christ, and thou shalt have written upon thee, the fair name of Jehovah, to stand legible for ever.

Or perhaps thou art a *physician* or a *chemist*; thou prescribest or preparest medicines for man's body. God stands there by the side of thy pestle and thy mortar, and by the table where thou writest thy prescriptions, and he says to thee, "Man, thou art sick; I can prescribe for thee. The blood and righteousness of Christ, laid hold of by faith, and applied by the Spirit, can cure thy soul. I can compound a medicine for thee that shall rid thee of thy ills and bring thee to the place where the inhabitants shall no more say 'I am sick.'" Wilt thou take my medicine or wilt thou reject it? Is it bitter to thee, and dost thou turn away from it? Come, drink my child, drink, for thy life lieth here; and how shalt thou escape if thou neglect so great salvation?" Do you cast iron, or melt lead, or fuse

the hard metals of the mines? then pray that the Lord may melt thine heart and cast thee in the mould of the gospel? Do you make garments for men? oh, be careful that you find a garment for yourself for ever.

Are you busy in *building* all day long, laying the stone upon its fellow and the mortar in its crevice? Then remember thou art building for eternity too. Oh that thou mayest thyself be built upon a good foundation! Oh that thou mayest build thereon, not wood, hay, or stubble, but gold, and silver, and precious stones, and things that will abide the fire! Take care man lest thou shouldst be God's scaffold, lest thou shouldst be used on earth to be a scaffolding for building his church, and when his church is built thou shouldst be cast down and burned up with fire unquenchable. Take heed that thou art built upon a rock, and not upon the sand, and that the vermillion cement of the Saviour's precious blood unites thee to the foundation of the building, and to every stone thereof.

Art thou a *jeweller*, and dost thou cut thy gem and polish the diamond from day to day? Would to God thou wouldst take warning from the contrast which thou presentest to the stone on which thou dost exercise thy craft. Thou cuttest it, and it glitters the more thou dost cut it; but though thou hast been cut and ground, though thou hast had cholera and fever, and hast been at death's door many a day, thou art none the brighter, but the duller, for alas! thou art no diamond. Thou art but the pebble-stone of the brook, and in the day when God makes up his jewels he shall not enclose thee in the casket of his treasures; for thou art not one of the precious sons of Zion, comparable unto fine gold. But be thy situation what it may, be thy calling what it may, there is a continual sermon preached to thy conscience. I would that thou wouldst now from this time forth open both eye and ear, and see and hear the things that God would teach thee.

And now, dropping the similitude while the clock shall tick but a few times more, let us put the matter thus—Sinner, thou art as yet without God and without Christ; thou art liable to death every hour. Thou canst not tell but that thou mayest be in the flames of hell before the clock shall strike ONE to-day. Thou art to-day "condemned already," because thou believest not in the Son of God. And Jesus Christ saith to thee this day, "Oh, that thou wouldst consider, thy latter end!" He cries to thee this morning, "How often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." I entreat you, consider your ways. If it be worth while to make your bed in hell, do it. If the pleasures of this world are worth being damned to all eternity for enjoying them, if heaven be a cheat and hell a delusion, go on in your sins. But, if there be hell for sinners and heaven for repenting ones, and if thou must dwell a whole eternity in one place or the other, without similitude, I put a plain question to thee—Art thou wise in living as thou dost, without thought,—careless, and godless? Wouldst thou ask now the way of salvation? It is simply this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." He died; he rose again; thou art to believe him to be thine. Thou art to believe that he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him. But, more than that, believing that to be a fact, thou art to cast thy soul upon that fact and trust to him, sink or swim. Spirit of God! help us each to do this; and by similitude, or by providence, or by thy prophets, bring us each to thyself and save us eternally, and unto thee shall be the glory.

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FAITH.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 4, 1858,
BY THE REV. J. F. S. GORDON, D.D.
IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, GLASGOW.

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."—Hebrews xi. 1.

WE suffer, and are exposed to suffering, only because of sin. To no small extent we can see, and are forced by circumstances to feel, that our various annoyances and troubles are caused by our particular sins: and when we cannot trace the direct connexion, we are reminded still of the sins which deserve correction so severe. And how the iron-conscience, and the stony heart soften and melt in the furnace of affliction,—that amidst returning mercy, an *obedient Faith* may come forth purified as gold! These tendencies of the discipline in the school of life, however, are only fairly manifest, in the cases where the opportunity of repentance and an *obedient Faith* is earnestly welcomed. But the opportunity for such a kind of Faith is *all along the path of our earthly necessities*. This world, our school of discipline, is constructed and arranged not to *prevent anxiety* to us the pupils, but to deepen and awaken it—to train us to *listen* to Him, our Teacher, our Guide, our Beloved Father. For this, the seasons are ordered, now cutting off the whole, now bringing in abundance. Even the season of increase is beset with constant hazards, as if purposely to make the mind (unstable as water,) to be tossed like the ocean. Over the early promise of the spring, the frosts keep hovering, threatening again and again to blight the blossom and the blade; which still are preserved to us, and cherished by the vernal sun and rain. Then succeed droughts, curling the leaf, parching the soil, and withering even the hidden roots and fibres of the plant,—bringing the expectation of the year to the utmost point of ruin: yet followed by rains so timely as to turn the whole earth into a scene of joyful hope. Then, when the harvests are waving in their glory, or the barns are filled with plenty—hail or tempest give their tokens in the sky, and spread devastation over the yellow fields—scattering the treasures of a year to the four winds: still, the threatening passes by, leaving the earth covered with a more placid smile, and promising more abundant rewards. So, manufactures and commerce have their seasons of jags: all plans and efforts meet their emergencies of difficulty, which put to nought the power and the wisdom of puny man; and so again, their contrary turns of relief tempt our erring minds to a fool's exaltation. All the

ways of men are beset with dangers amid prevailing blessings, as if purposely designed to awaken and deepen our anxiety—to make us ever look through the telescope of Faith beyond this earthly scene, this tempestuous sea of opposite and contending passions. So the *occasions* of this fleeting life, which expose us to despair or to presumption, which concentrate the mind upon present annoyances and enjoyments, are not a hindrance but an auxiliary to the Faith of the joys now unseen. The anxious hopes and fears of this mortal life are all to draw and force the mind beyond themselves. For what else is the design of the constant recurrence of our wants—food and fuel, raiment and home—why, as long as we live, are we continually exposed to new sufferings and calamities, each greater than the last? Why do we suffer pain? Why are our fears perpetually kept awake and even made intense by the mishaps of acquaintances and dear friends? Why are we shocked so often, on hearing or reading the sudden—would I mention *unprepared*—death of one we knew long and intimately? Why do we see *our very own* pine on beds of sickness, until all their beauty is consumed, and, to use the Psalmist's words, they "become like a bottle in the smoke?" i.e. resembling a leathern bottle, or one made of skin, hung up in the smoky tent to dry; so is one wasted with illness thus compared. Why sinks the heart at all this? Why! unless to awaken forethought and afterthought—to pull down the plumes of pride—to lay up a treasure in that chosen Spot of space where no train of earth can follow. But the *opportunity* for our Faith in the unseen things beyond the grave, depends not altogether upon the renewal of calamities, anxieties, fears, pain, and sickness. Is there not a similar effect produced by *the most unbroken prosperity—the most unshaken hopes*? It were strange to tell, if we did not of ourselves know it: desires gratified, deliverance attained, prosperity and hope, leave us still unsatisfied. No mere blessing of our present state completes our bliss. The fullest and most complete abundance leaves us still a lack of enjoyment, which nothing can supply but the hope of immortal glory. Why sinks the heart and frame under the load of "low spirits," even when all earthly supplies are full? Why! but to make us look forward, and pray that we may not have our portion in this world?

The condition of man, as we have now considered it, has still greater influence than we have yet claimed,—*in connection with that peculiar power upon the conscience, which awakens self-condemnation and repentance.* Amid health and prosperity, it may be easy to throw blame off ourselves, and even to say 'we have not sinned—there is no fear of us at the last.' But who has not felt such vapour-arguments give way, and *horror* come instead! Where reasonings and expostulations may have failed,—the acute sufferings of but a single hour, a sickness of peril, a sudden alarm, a flash of lightning, a sinking vessel, have awakened the soul to "a fearful looking for of judgment."

It is said that even David Hume, the talented infidel, was, on one occasion, bereft of his sophistry, and stood in awe of the terrors of the Lord. In a

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terrible storm of thunder and lightning—while riding in a lonely way, he put spurs to his horse, and galloped on repeating that beautiful hymn of infancy, familiar to us all :

*" This night when I lie down to sleep,
I give my soul to Christ to keep ;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take."*

Such are the influences of our earthly condition—such the species of *opportunities* of obtaining the end of our Faith. Search your own histories, my brethren. It is impossible for you to have lived long, without blessings and necessities, without hopes and fears, even if your lot may not have known the fiercest changes of humanity. So adapted is each of our conditions to prepare us for our eternal well-being, to anchor our hope within the veil, to hedge us to the Faith, to lift up our hearts to God.

But the most affecting, the most overruling proof that *the occasions of earth are designed as the opportunity for Faith*, is furnished by the *earthly history of our Lord* ; who became fitted for His office, by fellowship in the sufferings of our frail and feeble humanity. He, the sinless and spotless Lamb of God, calls us to follow His steps when He tread the path of life in our native weakness, to follow the life of His voluntary humiliation. Our exalted High Priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, because Himself hath suffered, being tempted. He considers as *His own*, the hunger, and the thirst, and the loneliness, and the nakedness, and the sickness of every soul of man that trusteth in Him. So tenderly, so personally, that when He shall sum up the history of earth, He shall be able to say to the instruments of relief—"I was hungry, and ye gave *Me* meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave *Me* drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took *Me* in ; I was naked, and ye clothed *Me* ; I was sick and in prison, and ye visited *Me* !" Can we, then, trifle with such a kindness, thus covering all our path, hearkening to every groan, bottling every tear ! O, blind we not our eyes to the mercy which overhangs all our paths, and, with the pity of a brother, offer to us the succour by which His own weakness was sustained through a path of suffering bitterer than ours. However small or great the necessity ; be it the fatigues and cares of the passing day—or the roaring and rolling over you of the great "water spouts" of trouble—the breasting alone the fiercest waves of unkindness and heartlessness : when your heart is sad and discouraged—O, then, let your eye of Faith discern how near is "the Throne of Heavenly Grace," the blood of sprinkling, the powerful intercession of our Great High Priest, "touched with a feeling of your infirmities"—drawing you on to be like unto Himself, learning obedience by the things which He suffered. Thus, we see how, (*as in our natural body,*) *mutual assistance* is necessary to the growth and vitality of the members of Christ's Mystical Body. The more the muscles of the natural body are brought into play, provided we do not overstrain them, the greater elasticity, and soundness, and

strength will they acquire. Even the very infant in his mother's arms stretches out his little feet and dances with joy. Not only is it true that every limb requires to be exercised for its own sake, but it is also true that each limb requires to be exercised for the benefit of the rest. So, then, every member of Christ's Body or Church is bound to consult for the good of the whole; for, being incorporated by Holy Baptism into Christ's Mystical Body, we are all connected one with another; and, whether one member suffer all the members suffer along with it: "there should be no schism in the body, but the members should have the same care one for another."

When a stone falls upon the placid surface of a lake, one circle after another (with its widening circumference) is seen to move over its waters until they are lost in the distance; an emblem of the different spheres of duty which every professing Christian ought to cherish in the family-circle of the Church of Christ. A *generous* spirit is pre-eminently the spirit of the gospel. A weak-hearted Christian is always a selfish one, consequently, a very unhealthy one. To secure the full development of the arm, it is not enough that the arm be moved when some purpose of its own is to be served; but it must be ready to perform whatever services it can render to any part of the body. From all which you may gather how incumbent upon you individually it is in persevering efforts to aid, with your time and money, every opportunity which comes to you in relieving the feeble or sick portions in that holy family to which we belong.

A chief means for testing your sincerity and faith is *ALMSGIVING*, which should ever be offered not grudgingly, or reluctantly, like the pulling of a tooth—but willingly and cheerfully—not to avoid the bother of a necessitous emergency, but as done to the person of the Redeemer Himself, as if He came to us on earth, and asked "a cup of cold water." "YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME." The poor and rich meet together in the House of God, without distinction of rank,—their privileges are common: they share equally in the blessings of the Gospel and Ordinances of the Church. Hence, all have the privilege of Honouring the Lord with their substance for the due support of His House and Worship. Christ now sits over against the Treasury, as He did of old, to observe what Offerings His professed followers make. My Brethren, Christ knows your respective circumstances, and will judge of your offerings accordingly. He needed no one to tell Him of the poverty of the Widow, or to say that "two mites" were all she had in the world. He knows them who are poor, and who, when they give what is in itself but little, give a large proportion of what they possess. Gifts that are merely large in themselves are nothing to One who could feed five thousand with five barley loaves and a few small fishes, and leave twelve basketfuls of fragments over; but Gifts that are relatively large (large as compared with the ability of those from whom they come) are precious in His sight, and shall in no wise lose their reward. Every case the Head of the Church knows, and He judges accordingly. He pronounced upon the offering of the Widow, by a reference to her means; and He will pronounce

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upon the Offerings of all in the same way. As it is the undoubted duty and privilege of all to give back again to God of His own, it is a question of great practical importance, *What method shall be pursued in collecting the contributions of the Faithful?* St. Paul lays down a plan: "*Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.*" Here is a principle laid down that there must be fixed periods when all are to have their contributions ready. Jehovah Himself settled, by a Law of the Old Dispensation, that ONE-TEXTH of what we possess should be devoted to Holy Things. If, my Brethren, you think the privileges of the Christian Church less valuable than those of the Jewish, you will give less, of course; if you think them more valuable, you will give in proportion. There is no fear of making yourselves Poor by Giving to God. Have Faith in God, and He will restore your Gift fourfold. To pass over any one because of the insignificance of his Offering would be to value the monied treasure alone, and overlook the infinitely higher value of that moral treasure which makes the offering of a single farthing more precious in God's sight than the most ostentatious benefaction. So much for ALMSGIVING as the TEST of FAITH.

But, who is not rebuked as he reviews his course of life? Who can prevent the blush of shame, or heal the sting of conscience? How commonly are prayers and resolutions all in vain? Common necessities are bountifully supplied, deep sorrows are alleviated, losses are retrieved, the worm, which was consuming as the moth, at God's command again blossomed as the rose, the lowering cloud passes over;—and again vain-glory and self-confidence return: again the man, who promised great things when environed with perplexity, becomes godless, indifferent, and prayerless, both in the House of God and out of it: the Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, (which was quite eagerly sought for when the grim king of terrors was seemingly nigh) is now, when the calamity has gone over, not needed for sustaining his body and soul unto everlasting life: this *chief* of all Means of Grace is not now regarded, (when all is well again,) as *the deep well of salvation* out of which if he drink not,—does he imagine he can be brought to the Fountain Head?

Beware, Brethren,—IN THE NAME OF GOD I BESEECH YOU,—of trifling with that solemn proverb, which hangs boding over the school of life—"HE THAT BEING OFTEN REPROVED, HARDENETH HIS NECK, SHALL SUDDENLY BE DESTROYED, AND THAT WITHOUT REMEDY." It is not strange, that so high a place should be given to *Faith* in the work of man's restoration to the presence and favour of God: for, without it, how could man on his part do anything religiously at all? God, the object of religion, dwells unseen in that high and holy place, where no human eye can penetrate. True, as we have been discoursing, He has been pleased to ordain that our education for the abodes of bliss may be matured as we grovel under things seen and temporal,—but yet, we only understand thereby, that One, invisible, is be-

hind. Heaven, the promised reward of the poor in spirit, who hunger and thirst after righteousness—the aim of all their hopes—is unseen. No one has been admitted into the happy country, and returned to tell us, that he has beheld the mansion of eternal joy, and actually trod where the curse is not, where all tears are wiped away, where “the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.” We are told also, that “the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God.” We read of unquenchable flames,—of a never-dying worm,—of unsending agonies,—of torments reserved for the impenitent who die in their iniquities, and who bid defiance to all admonition and warnings—such a doom as we cannot think of without shuddering. But, though we may well believe that such shall be the case; though, were there no other grounds, the beatings of a guilty conscience, the miseries of transgression, and the woes which are its fruits—the consequences *even often here* of offending God’s holy laws in sins of omission and commission—these alone might well make us believe all that has been revealed to us of a hell hereafter: yet, is the fire prepared unseen by us, and no man hath been to the gate of hell, and returned to tell us where or what it is.

It appears, then, that Religion deals with *the Unseen*: it teaches us to worship a God whom we see not: it animates us with hopes of an invisible place of future reward: its place of righteous retribution and punishment is unseen; the enemies of our soul, and the angels which minister to the heirs of salvation, are alike unseen:—and, WHO HAS SEEN THE SOUL THAT IS TO BE LOST OR SAVED! Such being the case, we understand at once how, without Faith, religion could not possibly exist. Without Faith it would be impossible to please God, or to pay Him any act of worship at all. For it is by Faith that the things which are not seen become as sure to us as those which we beheld with the eyes of our flesh. It is by Faith that the invisible world becomes present to our view, and we live with the unseen God for our Ruler and our Father; with Heaven, the country we are seeking; with Hell, a reality to be feared and avoided; with the air thronged with viewless spirits, leading us for good, or seeking our destruction, swift to do the will of the master they serve. Faith is the realization of unseen things, thus causing them to actuate us, and to serve for motives, like the things which we see around us. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith is to be influenced by what is unseen, as if seen: it is to embrace the promises, though seen but afar off, yet seem as though present; to be assured of them, and so assured, to live as strangers and pilgrims upon earth. At once we are able to comprehend how extensive is the province of Faith; how it must come in, as it were, in every religious act, in every religious word, and in every serious imagination. “Faith,” however, is “the gift of God:” it must be given to us to believe; and a rightly-disposed heart is requisite for this, which God alone can give.

Strange as it may seem, yet the fact is, that the Word of God is not truly believed by the generality of hearers: even by very many who attend the

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House of God pretty well upon the whole so far as the Sundays are concerned, without at all referring to the other Festivals and Holy Days enjoined for observance. Such may not, with the sceptic, profess their disbelief; but when the grand duties and commands of our Holy Faith are urged upon them, there is a secret disposition to doubt whether such reiterated injunctions are so indispensable to salvation as the duly authorized Minister of God represents them. Sermon after sermon is heard, but where the visible reform upon the many? Alas! the sweeping majority seem to think of nothing in the Sermon beyond the satisfaction or dissatisfaction it may occasion for the half hour it may be in delivering. Sermons are not got up for amusement, (the Pulpit is surely above this sort of thing,) although the spirit of the age looks at them too much in that light.

When we call upon you to feed your souls through Sealing Ordinances;—promulgate the promises, the denunciations, the blessings, the woes, of the glorious Gospel; when we enforce this or that particular duty, or denounce this or that particular vice—we are to be regarded not merely as going through the routine of our profession, but as God's Heralds deputed by the Apostolic Laying on of Hands, to utter, in the name of God, what it is His pleasure should be declared to that Flock we are set over. Our exhortations, advices, and remonstrances, are not ours, but God's, who condescends to make use of men like yourselves as His Instruments. Raise, then, Brethren, your minds above the weak and feeble instrument who is addressing you, and listen to him merely as the echo of the voice of God. Have first the disposition of a willing scholar, otherwise, no teacher can make anything of you: have profound reverence for *the Word* as the Word of God, and not of man; so can we say of you, with St. Paul to the Thessalonians—"For this cause, thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

The devils believe and tremble: such a belief is of no use. The test of our Faith is our Obedience; not merely a passable, inoffensive morality; but the submission of the mind, soul, and spirit, to the will of God. Faith waits upon God. Devotion consists in a habitual converse with God, rather than in occasional outbursts or transports of vehement prayers. It is the privilege of Faith to gaze steadily on the *Unseen*, glorifying God in the most unsearchable of His dealings, owning His wisdom when we cannot see it, bowing to His justice, when the equity of its decisions is obscured in darkness, and magnifying His goodness when chastised by the sorest afflictions. It is by the soul's submission in these things, that the genuineness and strength of true Faith are best ascertained. Little, indeed, do we know, comparatively speaking, of the *Unseen Kingdom*. We now see but through the glass of Faith darkly. Our best thoughts are inadequate to grasp its glory and bliss: our noblest conceptions of the sunlight of Heaven are but as faint streaks of indistinct

twilight. Yet, little though we know, we glean enough from the *Apocalypse* to arouse our dormant powers that we may ascend on the ladder of Faith and Prayer to Him who sits on the Throne, surrounded by a rainbow,—to deepen our contrition,—to cheer and quicken our drooping hearts till they burn with seraphic love, lit up with live coals from off the Altar of God. We learn from St. John the Divine that, in the *Unseen*, the LAMB slain from the foundation of the world is the Object of adoration and worship. The GOD-MAN, being Himself both Priest and Sacrifice, the hierarchies in Heaven fall prostrate before in lowly reverence and loving awe. He is the Alpha and Omega of their devotions; and, in hymning forth His praises, they are represented as bringing the powers of *Instrumental Music* to their aid, and letting their *Harp* be, as it were, a joyous undertone to the magnificent sound of voices, which are as the rush of many waters.—The song in Heaven is never hushed; the harp is never unstrung; from side to side, clothed in white, as choristers, the Heavenly Band antiphonally sing and answer one another. And if the things done in Heaven are the patterns of those to be done on earth, what is the conclusion at which we arrive! Surely when we imitate this pattern here below, we are assimilating our services to those who never fell from their first estate. The Church on earth is the Representative of the Church in Heaven. The Church on earth is the Christian's home here, and should ever speak of Heaven, his home hereafter. The Church on earth is the place where God's Honour dwelleth. Here Christ is set before us: all here tells of Christ, and shadows forth His Presence. We gaze on the distant ALTAR with its ornamental Cross,—and are hereby reminded of the wonders of redeeming love, and the sacrifice made by Christ for the sins of all born of woman. And when we adorn it, it is for Christ. It is to the Lamb slain we dedicate our gifts: and when we, in our humble way, strive to make the place of His Feet glorious, and make beautiful His Tabernacle, it is all for Christ. To Him we offer our choicest gifts; to Him we dedicate all that skill can design, and art accomplish. All our accessories of holy worship are devoted to Him: for, pure love dictates that nothing too costly of ours can be given back to Him, who out of love gave Himself for us. As, in the Book of the Revelation, the ALTAR in Heaven is repeatedly alluded to, so, in the words of St. Paul, "WE HAVE AN ALTAR" on earth whereon to offer the Memorial of the One Sacrifice which was, once for all, offered and slain on the Cross. The Great High Priest of our profession bears now in His glorified Humanity in Heaven the marks of His suffering here upon earth,—the five blessed Wounds imprinted upon His Sacred Body, He ever presents to His Father, as our Mediator, the merits of this most precious Oblation, as well as the prayers of the saints as holy incense. So, "*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" After the AWFUL FINAL SCENE, Faith will be no more, nor no more needed. If found Faithful, our Faith shall merge into Beatific Vision; we shall gaze upon the Sun of Righteousness who is the Light of the New Jerusalem, and who filleth all things with the brightness of His shining.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

SOVEREIGN GRACE AND MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 1, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."—Rom. x. 20—21.

DOUBTLESS these words primarily refer to the casting away of the Jews, and to the choosing of the Gentiles. The Gentiles were a people who sought not after God, but lived in idolatry; nevertheless, Jehovah was pleased in these latter times to send the gospel of his grace to them: while the Jews who had long enjoyed the privileges of the Word of God, on account of their disobedience and rebellion were cast away. I believe, however, that while this is the primary object of the words of our text, yet, as Calvin says, the truth taught in the text is a type of a universal fact. As God did choose the people who knew him not, so hath he chosen, in the abundance of his grace, to manifest his salvation to men who are out of the way; while, on the other hand, the men who are lost, after having heard the Word, are lost because of their wilful sin; for God doth all the day long "stretch forth his hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

The system of truth is not one straight line, but two. No man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once. I am taught in one book to believe that what I sow I shall reap: I am taught in another place, that "it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." I see in one place, God presiding over all in providence; and yet I see, and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions to his own will, in a great measure. Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act, that there was no presidence of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to Atheism; and if, on the other hand, I declare that God so overrules all things, as that man is not free enough to be responsible, I am driven at once into Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is just the fault of our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one place that everything is fore-ordained, *that is true*; and if I find in another place that man is responsible for all his actions, *that is true*; and it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other. These two truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.

Now, this morning I am about to consider the two doctrines. In the 20th verse, we have taught us *the doctrine of sovereign grace*—"But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." In the next verse, we have *the doctrine of man's guilt* in

rejecting God. "To Israel he saith, all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

I. First, then, **DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AS EXEMPLIFIED IN SALVATION.** If any man be saved, he is saved by Divine grace, and by Divine grace alone; and the reason of his salvation is not to be found in him, but in God. We are not saved as the result of anything that we do or that we will; but we will and do as the result of God's good pleasure, and the work of his grace in our hearts. No sinner can prevent God; that is, he cannot go before him, cannot anticipate him; God is always first in the matter of salvation. He is before our convictions, before our desires, before our fears, before our hopes. All that is good or ever will be good in us, is preceded by the grace of God, and is the effect of a Divine cause within.

Now in speaking of God's gracious acts of salvation, this morning, I notice first, that they are entirely *unmerited*. You will see that the people here mentioned certainly did not merit God's grace. They found him, but they never sought for him; he was made manifest to them, but they never asked for him. There never was a man saved yet who merited it. Ask all the saints of God, and they will tell you that their former life was spent in the lusts of the flesh; that in the days of their ignorance, they revolted against God and turned back from his ways, that when they were invited to come to him they despised the invitation, and, when warned, cast the warning behind their back. They will tell you that their being drawn by God, was not the result of any merit before conversion; for some of them, so far from having any merit, were the very vilest of the vile: they plunged into the very kennel of sin; they were not ashamed of all the things of which it would be a shame for us to speak; they were ringleaders in crime, very princes in the ranks of the enemy; and yet sovereign grace came to them, and they were brought to know the Lord. They will tell you that it was not the result of anything good in their disposition, for although they trust that there is now something excellent implanted in them, yet in the days of their flesh they could see no one quality which was not perverted to the service of Satan. Ask them whether they think they were chosen of God because of their courage; they will tell you, no; if they had courage it was defaced, for they were courageous to do evil. Question them whether they were chosen of God because of their talent; they will tell you, no; they had that talent, but they prostituted it to the service of Satan. Question them whether they were chosen because of the openness and generosity of their disposition; they will tell you that that very openness of temper, and that very generosity of disposition, led them to plunge deeper into the depths of sin, than they otherwise would have done, for they were "hail fellow, well met," with every evil man, and ready to drink and join every jovial party which should come in their way. There was in them no reason whatever why God should have mercy upon them, and the wonder to them is that he did not cut them down in the midst of their sins, blot out their names from the book of life, and sweep them into the gulf where the fire burneth that shall devour the wicked. But some have said that God chooses his people because he foresees that after he chooses them, they will do this, that, and the other, which shall be meritorious and excellent. Refer again to the people of God, and they will tell you that since their conversion they have had much to weep over. Although they can rejoice that God has begun the good work in them, they often tremble lest it should not be God's work at all. They will tell you that if they are abundant in faith yet there are times when they are superabundant in unbelief; that if sometimes they are full of works of holiness, yet there are times when they weep many tears to think that those very acts of holiness were stained with sin. The Christian will tell you that he weeps over his very tears; he feels that there is filth even in the best of desires; that he has to pray to God to forgive his prayers, for there is sin in the midst of his supplications, and that he has to sprinkle even his best offerings with the atoning blood, for he never else can bring an offering without spot or blemish. You shall appeal to the brightest saint, to the man whose presence in the midst of society is like the presence of an angel, and he will tell you that he is still ashamed of himself. "Ah!" he will say, "you may praise me, but I cannot praise myself; you speak well of me, you applaud me, but if you knew my heart you would see abundant reason to think of me as a poor sinner saved by grace, who hath nothing whereof to glory, and must bow his head and confess his iniquities in the sight of God." Grace, then, is entirely unmerited.

Again, the grace of God is *sovereign*. By that word we mean that God has an absolute right to give that grace where he chooses, and to withhold it when he pleases. He is not bound to give it to any man, much less to all men; and if he chooses to give it to one man and not to another, his answer is, "Is thine eye evil because mine eye is good? Can I not do as I will with mine own? I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Now, I want you to notice the sovereignty of Divine grace as illustrated in the text: "I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not after me." You would imagine that if God gave his grace to any he would wait until he found them earnestly seeking him. You would imagine that God in the highest heavens would say, "I have mercies, but I will leave men alone, and when they feel their need of these mercies and seek me diligently with their whole heart, day and night, with tears, and vows, and supplications, then will I bless them, but not before." But, beloved, God saith no such thing. It is true he doth bless them that cry unto him, but he blesses them before they cry, for their cries are not their own cries, but cries which he has put into their lips; their desires are not of their own growth, but desires which he has cast like good seed into the soil of their hearts. God saves the men that do not seek him. Oh, wonder of wonders! It is mercy indeed when God saves a seeker; but how much greater mercy when he seeks the lost himself! Mark, the parable of Jesus Christ concerning the lost sheep; it does not run thus: "A certain man had a hundred sheep, and one of them did go astray. And he tarried at home, and lo, the sheep came back, and he received it joyfully and said to his friends, rejoice, for the sheep that I have lost is come back." No; he *went after* the sheep: it never would have come after him; it would have wandered farther and farther away. He went after it; over hills of difficulty, down valleys of despondency he pursued its wandering feet, and at last he laid hold of it; he did not drive it before him, he did not lead it, but he carried it himself all the way, and when he brought it home he did not say, "the sheep is come back," but, "I have *found* the sheep which was lost." Men do not seek God first; God seeks them first; and if any of you are seeking him to-day it is because he has first sought you. If you are desiring him he desired you first, and your good desires and earnest seeking will not be the cause of your salvation, but the effects of previous grace given to you. "Well," says another, "I should have thought that although the Saviour might not require an earnest seeking and sighing and groaning, and a continuous searching after him, yet certainly he would have desired and demanded that every man, before he had grace, should ask for it." That, indeed, beloved, seems natural, and God *will* give grace to them that ask for it; but mark, the text says that he was manifested "to them that asked not for him." That is to say, before we ask, God gives us grace. The only reason why any man ever begins to pray, is because God has put previous grace in his heart which leads him to pray. I remember, when I was converted to God, I was an Arminian thoroughly. I thought I had begun the good work myself, and I used sometimes to sit down and think, "Well, I sought the Lord four years before I found him," and I think I began to compliment myself upon the fact that I had perseveringly entreated of him in the midst of much discouragement. But one day the thought struck me, "How was it you came to seek God?" and in an instant the answer came from my soul, "Why, because he led me to do it; he must first have shown me my need of him, or else I should never have sought him; he must have shown me his preciousness, or I never should have thought him worth seeking;" and at once I saw the doctrines of grace as clear as possible. God must begin. Nature can never rise above itself. You put water into a reservoir, and it will rise as high as that, but no higher if let alone. Now, it is not in human nature to seek the Lord. Human nature is depraved, and therefore, there must be the extraordinary pressure of the Holy Spirit put upon the heart to lead us first to ask for mercy. But mark, we do not know anything about that, while the Spirit is operating; we find that out afterwards. We ask as much as if we were asking all of ourselves. Our business is to seek the Lord as if there were no Holy Spirit at all. But although we do not know it, there must always be a previous motion of the Spirit in our heart, before there will be a motion of our heart towards him.

"No sinner can be beforehand with thee,
Thy grace is most sovereign, most rich, and most free."

Let me give you an illustration. You see that man on his horse surrounded by

a body of troopers. How proud he is, and how he reins up his horse with conscious dignity. Sir, what have you got there? What are those despatches you treasure up with so much care? "Oh, sir, I have that in my hand that will vex the church of God in Damascus. I have dragged the fellows into the synagogue, both men and women; I have scourged them, and compelled them to blaspheme; and I have this commission from the high priest to drag them to Jerusalem, that I may put them to death." Saul! Saul! have you no love for Christ? "Love to him! No. When they stoned Stephen, I took care of the witnesses' clothes, and I rejoiced to do it. I wish I had had the crucifying of their Master, for I hate them with perfect hatred, and I breathe out threatenings and slaughter against them." What do you say of this man? If he be saved, will you not grant that it must be some Divine sovereignty that converts him? Look at poor Pilate, how much there was that was hopeful in him. He was willing to save the Master, but he feared and trembled. If we had had our choice, we should have said, "Lord, save Pilate, he does not want to kill Christ, he labours to let him escape; but slay the bloodthirsty Saul, he is the very chief of sinners." "No," says God, "I will do as I will with mine own." The heavens open, and the brightness of glory descends—brighter than the noon-day sun. Stunned with the light he falls to the ground, and a voice is heard addressing him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." He rises up; God appears to him: "Lo, I have made thee a chosen vessel to bear my name among the Gentiles." Is not that sovereignty—sovereign grace, without any previous seeking? God was found of him that sought not for him; he manifested himself to one that asked him not. Some will say, that was a miracle; but it is one that is repeated every day in the week. I knew a man once, who had not been to the house of God for a long time; and one Sunday morning, having been to market to buy a pair of ducks for his Sunday dinner, he happened to see a house of God opened as he was passing by. "Well," he thought, "I will hear what these fellows are up to." He went inside; the hymn that was being sung struck his attention; he listened to the sermon, forgot his ducks, discovered his own character, went home, and threw himself upon his knees before God, and after a short time it pleased God to give him joy and peace in believing. That man had nothing in him to begin with, nothing that could have led you to imagine he ever would be saved, but simply because God would have it so, he struck the effectual blow of grace, and the man was brought to himself. But we are, each of us who are saved, the very people who are the best illustrations of the matter. To this day, my wonder is, that ever the Lord should have chosen me. I cannot make it out; and my only answer to the question is, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

I have now, I think, stated the doctrine pretty plainly. Let me only say a few words about it. Some people are very much afraid of this truth. They say, "It is true, I dare say, but still you ought not to preach it before a mixed assembly; it is very well for the comfort of God's people, but it is to be very carefully handled, and not to be publicly preached upon." Very well, sir, I leave you to settle that matter with my Master. He gave me this great book to preach from, and I cannot preach from anything else. If he has put anything in it you think is not fit, go and complain to him, and not to me. I am simply his servant, and if his errand that I am to tell is objectionable, I cannot help it. If I send my servant to the door with a message, and he delivers it faithfully, he does not deserve to be scolded. Let me have the blame, not the servant. So I say; blame my Master, and not me, for I do but proclaim his message. "No," says one, "it is not to be preached." But it is to be preached. Every word of God is given by inspiration, and it is profitable for some good end. Does not the Bible say so? Let me tell you, the reason why many of our churches are declining is just because this doctrine has not been preached. Wherever this doctrine has been upheld, it has always been "Down with Popery." The first reformers held this doctrine and preached it. Well said a Church of England divine to some who railed at him, "Look at your own Luther. Do you not consider him to be the teacher of the Church of England? What Calvin and the other reformers taught is to be found in his book upon the freedom of the will." Besides, we can point you to a string of ministers from the beginning even until now. Talk of apostolic succession! The man who preaches the doctrines of grace has an apostolic succession indeed. Can we not trace our pedigree through a whole line of men like Newton, and Whitfield, and Owen, and Bunyan, straight away on till we come

to Calvin, and Luther, Zwingle; and then we can go back from them to Savonarola, to Jerome of Prague, to Huss, and then back to Augustine, the mighty preacher of Christianity; and from St. Augustine to Paul is but one step. We need not be ashamed of our pedigree; although Calvinists are now considered to be heterodox, we are and ever must be orthodox. It is the old doctrine. Go and buy any puritanical book, and see if you can find Arminianism in it. Search all the book stalls over, and see if you can find one large folio book of olden times that has anything in it but the doctrine of the free grace of God. Let this once be brought to bear upon the minds of men, and away go the doctrines of penance and confession, away goes paying for the pardon of your sin. If grace be free and sovereign in the hand of God, down goes the doctrine of priestcraft, away go buying and selling indulgences and such like things; they are swept to the four winds of heaven, and the efficacy of good works is dashed in pieces like Dagon before the ark of the Lord. "Well," says one, "I like the doctrine; still there are very few that preach it, and those that do are very high." Very likely; but I care little what anybody calls me. It signifies very little what men call you. Suppose they call you a "hyper," that does not make you anything wicked, does it? Suppose they call you an Antinomian, that will not make you one. I must confess, however, that there are some men who preach this doctrine who are doing ten thousand times more harm than good, because they don't preach the next doctrine I am going to proclaim, which is just as true. They have this to be the sail, but they have not the other to be the ballast. They can preach one side, but not the other. They can go along with the high doctrine, but they will not preach the whole of the Word. Such men caricature the Word of God. And just let me say here, that it is the custom of a certain body of Ultra-Calvinists, to call those of us who teach that it is the duty of man to repent and believe, "Mongrel Calvinists." If you hear any of them say so, give them my most respectful compliments, and ask them whether they ever read Calvin's works in their lives. Not that I care what Calvin said or did not say; but ask them whether they ever read his works; and if they say "No," as they must say, for there are forty-eight large volumes, you can tell them, that the man whom they call "a Mongrel Calvinist," though he has not read them all, has read a very good share of them, and knows their spirit; and he knows that he preaches substantially what Calvin preached—that every doctrine he preaches may be found in Calvin's Commentaries on some part of Scripture or other. We are TRUE Calvinists, however. Calvin is nobody to us. Jesus Christ and him crucified, and the old fashioned Bible, are our standards. Beloved, let us take God's Word as it stands. If we find high doctrine there, let it be high; if we find low doctrine, let it be low; let us set up no other standard than the Bible affords.

II. Now then for the second point. "There now," says my ultra friend, "he is going to contradict himself." No, my friend, I am not, I am only going to contradict *you*. The second point is MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY. "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. Now, these people whom God had cast away had been wooed, had been sought, had been entreated to be saved; but they would not, and inasmuch as they were not saved, it was the effect of their disobedience and their gainsaying. That lies clearly enough in the text. When God sent the prophets to Israel, and stretched forth his hands, what was it for? What did he wish them to come to him for? Why, to be saved. "No," says one, "it was for temporal mercies." Not so, my friend; the verse before is concerning spiritual mercies, and so is this one, for they refer to the same thing. Now, was God sincere in his offer? God forgive the man that dares to say he was not. God is undoubtedly sincere in every act he did. He sent his prophets, he entreated the people of Israel to lay hold on spiritual things, but they would not, and though he stretched out his hands all the day long, yet they were "a disobedient and gainsaying people," and would not have his love; and on their head rests their blood.

Now let me notice the wooing of God and of what sort it is. First, it was the most affectionate wooing in the world. Lost sinners who sit under the sound of the gospel are not lost for the want of the most affectionate invitation. God says he stretched out his hands. You know what that means. You have seen the child who is disobedient and will not come to his father. The father puts out his hands, and says, "Come, my child, come; I am ready to forgive you." The tear is in his eye, and his bowels move with compassion, and he says, "Come,

come." God says this is what *he* did—"he stretched out his hands." That is what he has done to some of you. You that are not saved to-day are without excuse, for God stretched out his hands to you, and he said, "Come, come." Long have you sat beneath the sound of the ministry, and it has been a faithful one, I trust, and a weeping one. Your minister has not forgotten to pray for your souls in secret or to weep over you when no eye saw him, and he has endeavoured to persuade you as an ambassador from God. God is my witness, I have sometimes stood in this pulpit, and I could not have pleaded harder for my own life than I have pleaded with you. In Christ's name, I have cried, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I have wept over you as the Saviour did, and used his words on his behalf, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." And you know that your conscience has often been touched; you have often been moved; you could not resist it. God was so kind to you; he invited you so affectionately by the Word; he dealt so gently with you by his providence; his hands were stretched out, and you could hear his voice speaking in your ears, "Come unto me, come: come, now let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." You have heard him cry, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." You have heard him say with all the affection of a father's heart, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Oh! God does plead with men that they would be saved, and this day he says to every one of you, "Repent, and be converted for the remission of your sins. Turn ye unto me. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways." And with love divine he woos you as a father woos his child, putting out his hands and crying, "Come unto me, come unto me." "No," says one strong-doctrine man, "God never invites all men to himself; he invites none but certain characters." Stop, sir, that is all you know about it. Did you ever read that parable where it is said, "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." And they that were bidden *would not come*. And did you never read that they all began to make excuse, and that they were punished because they did not accept the invitations. Now, if the invitation is not to be made to anybody, but to the man who will accept it, how can that parable be true? The fact is, the oxen and fatlings are killed; the wedding feast is ready, and the trumpet sounds, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come and eat, come and drink." Here are the provisions spread, here is an all-sufficiency; the invitation is free; it is a great invitation without limitation. "*Whosoever will*, let him come and take of the water of life freely." And that invitation is couched in tender words, "Come to me, my child, come to me." "All day long I have stretched forth my hands."

And note again, this invitation was very *frequent*. The words, "all the day long," may be translated "daily"—"Daily have I stretched forth my hands." Sinner, God has not called you once to come, and then let you alone, but every day has been at you; every day has conscience spoken to you; every day has providence warned you, and every Sabbath has the Word of God wooed you. Oh! how much some of you will have to account for at God's great bar! I cannot now read your characters, but I know there are some of you who will have a terrible account at last. All the day long has God been wooing you. From the first dawn of your life, he wooed you through your mother, and she used to put your little hands together, and teach you to say,

"Gentle Jesus meek and mild,
Look upon a little child,
Pity my simplicity;
Suffer me to come to thee."

And in your boyhood God was still stretching out his hands after you. How your Sunday-school teacher endeavoured to bring you to the Saviour! How often your youthful heart was affected; but you put all that away, and you are still untouched by it. How often did your mother speak to you, and your father warn you; and you have forgotten the prayer in that bed-room when you were sick, when your mother kissed your burning forehead, knelt down and prayed to God to spare your

life, and then added that prayer, "Lord, save my boy's soul!" And you recollect the Bible she gave you, when you first went out apprentice, and the prayer she wrote on that yellow front leaf. When she gave it, you did not perhaps know, but you may now; how earnestly she longed after you, that you might be formed anew in Christ Jesus; how she followed you with her prayers, and how she entreated with her God for you. And you have not yet surely forgotten how many Sabbaths you have spent, and how many times you have been warned. Why you have had waggon-loads of sermons wasted on you. A hundred and four sermons you have heard every year, and some of you more, and yet you are still just what you were.

But sinners, sermon hearing is an awful thing unless it is blessed to our souls. If God has kept on stretching out his hands every day and all the day, it will be a hard thing for you when you shall be justly condemned not only for your breaches of the law, but for your wilful rejection of the gospel. It is probable that God will keep on stretching out his hands to you until your hairs grow grey, still continually inviting you; and perhaps when you are nearing death he will still say, "Come unto me, come unto me." But if you still persist in hardening your heart, if still you reject Christ, I beseech you let nothing make you imagine that you shall go unpunished. Oh! I do tremble sometimes when I think of that class of ministers who tell sinners that they are not guilty if they do not seek the Saviour. How they shall be found innocent at God's great day I do not know. It seems to be a fearful thing that they should be lulling poor souls into sleep by telling them it is not their duty to seek Christ and repent, but that they may do as they like about that, and that when they perish they will be none the more guilty for having heard the Word. My Master did not say that. Remember how he said, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." Jesus did not talk thus when he spoke to Chorazin and Bethsaida; for he said, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." It was not the way Paul preached. He did not tell sinners that there was no guilt in despising the cross. Hear the apostle's words once more: "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, *how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation*, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." Sinner, at the great day of God thou must give an account for every warning thou hast ever had, for every time thou hast read thy Bible, ay, and for every time thou hast neglected to read it; for every Sunday when the house of God was open and thou didst neglect to avail thyself of the opportunity of hearing the Word, and for every time thou didst hear it and didst not improve it. Ye who are careless hearers, are tying faggots for your own burning for ever. Ye that hear and straightway forget, or hear with levity, are digging for yourselves a pit into which ye must be cast. Remember, no one will be responsible for your damnation but yourself, at the last great day. God will not be responsible for it. "As I live saith the Lord"—and that is a great oath—"I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." God has done much for you. He sent you his Gospel. You are not born in a heathen land; he has given you the Book of Books; he has given you an enlightened conscience; and if you perish under the sound of the ministry, you perish more fearfully and terribly, than if you had perished anywhere else.

This doctrine is as much God's Word as the other. You ask me to reconcile the two. I answer, they do not want any reconciliation; I never tried to reconcile them to myself, because I could never see a discrepancy. If you begin to put fifty or sixty quibbles to me, I cannot give any answer. Both are true; no two truths can be inconsistent with each other; and what you have to do is to believe them both. With the first one, the saint has most to do. Let him praise the free and sovereign grace of God, and bless his name. With the second, the sinner has the most to do. O sinner, humble thyself under the mighty hand of God, when thou thinkest of how often he hath shown his love to thee, by bidding thee come to

himself, and yet how often thou hast spurned his Word and refused his mercy, and turned a deaf ear to every invitation, and hast gone thy way to rebel against a God of love, and violate the commands of him that loved thee.

And now, how shall I conclude? My first exhortation shall be to Christian people. My dear friends, I beseech you do not in any way give yourselves up to any system of faith apart from the Word of God. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants: I am the successor of the great and venerated Dr. Gill, whose theology is almost universally received among the stronger Calvinistic churches; but although I venerate his memory, and believe his teachings, yet he is not my Rabbi. What you find in God's Word is for you to believe and to receive. Never be frightened at a doctrine; and above all, never be frightened at a name. Some one said to me the other day, that he thought the truth lay somewhere between the two extremes. He meant right, but I think he was wrong. I do not think the truth lies between the two extremes, but in them both. I believe the higher a man goes the better, when he is preaching the matter of salvation. The reason why a man is saved is grace, grace, grace; and you may go as high as you like there. But when you come to the question as to why men are damned, then the Arminian is far more right than the Antinomian. I care not for any denomination or party, I am as high as Huntingdon upon the matter of *salvation*, but question me about damnation, and you will get a very different answer. By the grace of God I ask no man's applause, I preach the Bible as I find it. Where we get wrong is where the Calvinist begins to meddle with the question of damnation, and interferes with the justice of God; or when the Arminian denies the doctrine of grace.

My second exhortation is,—Sinners, I beseech every one of you who are unconverted and ungodly, this morning to put away every form and fashion of excuse that the devil would have you make concerning your being unconverted. Remember, that all the teaching in the world can never excuse you for being enemies to God by wicked works. When we beseech you to be reconciled to him, it is because we know you will never be in your proper place until you are reconciled. God has made you; can it be right that you should disobey him? God feeds you every day: can it be right that you should still live in disobedience to him? Remember, when the heavens shall be on a blaze, when Christ shall come to judge the earth in righteousness and his people with equity, there will not be one excuse that you can make which will be valid at the last great day. If you should attempt to say, "Lord, I have never heard the word;" his answer would be, "Thou didst hear it; thou heardest it plainly." "But Lord, I had an evil will." "Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee; thou hadst that evil will, and I condemn thee for it. This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "But Lord," some will say, "I was not predestinated." "What hadst thou to do with that? Thou didst do according to thine own will when thou didst rebel. Thou wouldest not come unto me, and now I destroy thee for ever. Thou hast broken my law—on thine own head be the guilt." If a sinner could say at the great day, "Lord, I could not be saved anyhow;" his torment in hell would be mitigated by that thought: but this shall be the very edge of the sword, and the very burning of the fire—"Ye knew your duty and ye did it not: ye trampled on everything that was holy; ye neglected the Saviour, and how shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?"

Now, with regard to myself; you may some of you go away and say, that I was Antinomian in the first part of the sermon and Arminian at the end. I care not. I beg of you to search the Bible for yourselves. To the law and to the testimony; if I speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in me. I am willing to come to that test. Have nothing to do with me where I have nothing to do with Christ. Where I separate from the truth, cast my words away. But if what I say be God's teaching, I charge you, by him that sent me, give these things your thoughts, and turn unto the Lord with all your hearts.

THE COMING REVIVAL:

A Sermon,

PREACHED IN

NEW COURT CHAPEL, CAREY STREET,

LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS,

ON SUNDAY, MAY 30TH, 1858,

BY

REV. W. H. DRAPER,

MINISTER OF THE CHAPEL.



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THE COMING REVIVAL.

PSALM LXXXV. 6.

“Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?”

GOD has made the happiness and usefulness of things to depend on healthy action. It is only whilst the sap continues its upward movement that the tree, from stem to crown, becomes gemmed with leaves and flowers. What a stoppage of circulation can do is seen in its desiccated and denuded foliage. It is the healthy flow of the purple fluid in our frames which contributes strength to muscle, sensitiveness to nerve, clearness to thought, and vivacity to life. The fearful results which follow a stoppage in trade are familiar to us all in the careworn features, mental despondency, and physical privations of the community; and we all know that a revival of trade spreads far more real joy through a nation than news of the most splendid victory.

More intimate, if possible, is the connexion between the healthy flow of vital piety throughout the Church, and its happiness and usefulness. Let that spiritual power permeate it, and it stands forth in its native strength and beauty, “clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners.” Denude it of that inner power, and the Church becomes as useless to the world, as it is injurious to itself and displeasing to God.

It is a sad thing to contemplate, that stoppage and stagnation are facts of periodical occurrence on earth. Year after year the flow of vegetable life is arrested by the decline of seasons; and nature, so lovely and happy when the spring sun smiled on her, becomes unsightly and bare when touched by the winter’s chill. The law of death in our bodies is as certain as the law which gave them life. The first heart-beat is prophetic of the last. Nor does commerce escape this universal law. Ever and anon communities overstep, with a fatal regularity, the limits of national solvency; and the Church, although so Divine in its origin, so apparently removed from any affinity with other things, does not escape the law which lays an arrest on the movements of healthy life. So perverse is man, even under the best of influences, that the Church always has had occasion at times to offer up the prayer of the

Psalmist, "Wilt thou not revive us again?" Whether it be true or not, as a modern philosopher has said,—that this periodical arrest of the movements of life is peculiar only to the planets, and that whatever may be the organisation existing in the centres of planetary systems, the suns, that there life in all its forms, unvisited by a change of seasons, keeps running on in perpetual and regular activity,—one thing we know, as Christians, that this law of arrested life knows no existence in *heaven*. There flowers are amaranthine, human frames are incorruptible, the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in its archives, is incapable of decay. On earth alone we see the flower fade in our embrace, the bodies of our beloved ones droop and die; and on earth alone is it that this prayer is relevant to the occasional condition of the Church.

But does the Church *need* a revival at the present time? If so, is there any *hope* of her enjoying it? and what peculiar value is there attaching to a *genuine revival* which should encourage us to pray for it? Such are the three suggestions of our text: "*Revive us again*"—we need it; "*Wilt thou not revive us again*"—there is hope as well as earnestness in the prayer; "*that thy people may rejoice in thee*"—the value of a revival is great, leading us to *rejoice in God*.

I. OUR NEED OF A REVIVAL.

1. *The general absence of religious earnestness.* When one was asked his opinion respecting the religious movement effected through the instrumentality of Wesley and Whitfield, he replied that it was "Christianity in earnest." To my mind the reply was more expressive of the prevalent coldness on religious matters, with which that earnestness contrasted, than descriptive of what the movement really was. Christianity in earnest! did not the reply virtually admit that there might be Christianity *without* earnestness? and is it not one of the most prevalent mistakes of the times, that all Christians are not bound to be earnest? that as each man has some particular view on political matters, yet all men are not obliged enthusiastically to support their peculiar opinions, even so men may be Christians without being necessarily over-earnest in the matter? This is a radical and pernicious mistake; Christianity is more than an opinion; for if it be true that ardency of feeling and force of character depend on the momentousness of what a man believes, then not only is it true that the most intense form of earnestness is only possible to him who believes in the personal and paramount importance of spiritual religion; but a man's Christianity may be measured by the practical earnestness he evinces in connexion there-

with, so that instead of saying of that or any similar movement it is "Christianity in earnest," the proper reply would be, It is Christianity as it is, or should be. Earnestness—nay, even enthusiasm, taking that word in its good meaning—is the normal state of Christianity. Were not the early Christians earnest? so enthusiastic in their religion as to be regarded by those who had never experienced what they felt as "beside" themselves—made mad by what they had learned? Is not every converted soul in earnest so long as the flame of his first love remains unquenched? Yes, brethren, for although it be true that earnestness in itself is of little worth, nay, may be as pregnant with evil as with good, so natural, so necessary is it to true Christianity, that in proportion to its absence among Christian men do they need reviving again. Do we need any proof of the want of individual earnestness in these times? Does not that proof meet us everywhere? Where shall we go to find the successors of those men who "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need; and continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people?" We look not for the particular form their earnestness took—(that religious display of communistic principles was but a providential development of Christian earnestness to meet the special exigencies of the infant Church), but for the same earnest spirit, and, alas! are met by an apathy and coldness which would be deplored if found in connexion with a professedly human system. Our religion has become a matter of ceremony rather than conviction, of habit rather than feeling. We have traditional faith, unfeeling orthodoxy, unpractical profession,—a form of godliness; but anything like the earnestness of primitive Christianity does not, to any appreciable extent, appear to exist. Truly we need to pray, "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

2. Another evidence of our need of a revival is *a want of faith in the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel*. Systems are distinguished from each other by those real or assumed truths in the possession of which they differ. The *Gospel* differs from all other systems by its proclamation of doctrines peculiar to itself—truths which are not so much parts of the system as the system itself—doctrines so vital, so essential, that if they are ignored the system itself is destroyed. What these doctrines are I need not state; they are those which stand in the foreground of apostolic teaching, on the pedestal of apostolic argument, doctrines so handled in the Scriptures that those who wrote them, clearly

meant them to become prime articles of human faith, and the very promulgation of which instrumentally occasioned the marvellous success of early Christianity.

Now, what is the attitude of some among us, in relation to those fundamental truths? hostility? denial?—No, there never was, perhaps, less of formal heterodoxy in the Church than there is now. What, then, is that attitude? I say, and I do so with regret, that, in many instances, it is a want of sympathy for, or a want of faith in, them. They are proclaimed as doctrines, but not as *the* doctrines. They are spoken of occasionally, but not constantly. The great evil in the Christian Church is, a want of prominence in dealing with those truths. Do you ask me why this has happened?—why men have departed from apostolic precedent in this matter? I say, it is in a great measure due, I fear, to a morbid worship of intellectualism. In order to keep a-head of the march of intellect in society, and to make the “pulpit a power,” Christian men seek to make an advance on the teachings of apostles, and to become so original as to eliminate from the Bible that which the Holy Spirit never put there. They forsake the old paths, beaten out by inspired thought, for new ones of their own invention. Why is this? Is it merely to satisfy the world in its Athenistic craving for “some new thing,” or because those old topics are worn out and have lost their power? Is it the first? Then what right have they to minister to a craving which, from its nature, can never be satisfied? Christianity comes, not to meet every wish of the soul, but those the gratification of which is needful in order to purity and happiness. True it is that there is much in the Gospel to minister to the highest intellectual powers of man; yet when we remember that its mission is to commend the truth to every man’s *conscience*, and that in a community excessive intellectualism is the worship of the few, rather than of the multitude,—that the highest intellectual advancement of a people is not synonymous with truest progress—and also that Christian teachers are bound to imitate their apostolic predecessors, who preached not to the philosopher, but to the people,—we can recognise no obligation on the part of Christian men in the present day to hold back those distinctive doctrines in order to satisfy the world. Nor are they worn out, nor have they lost their power; but men have lost faith in them, and hence the little prominence given to them in some portions of the Christian Church. And what is this but the evidence of our need of revival? Nothing but a revival can save us in this particular; for all history shows that God owns and honours those distinctive doctrines so much,

that every genuine revival which has ever happened has been either preceded or followed by an earnest and prominent proclamation of those very truths. The Holy Spirit, who owns only what Himself has inspired, will never sanction that which comes as its substitute. Yes, we need a revival; and nothing less than a revival can preserve to us those grand old doctrines which the Hebrew seer ran out in vision with rapture to embrace, and the early martyr wound round him a mantle of flame rather than deny.

3. We learn our need of a revival from *the limited influence of Christian character*. In reading the Bible, we discover not only that it is fitted by motive, precept, promise, and example, to produce in its believers a higher and purer character than is possible under any other system, but that its design is only realised when that character is attained. "He gave himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." A spiritually moral character so pure in its motives, so high in its aims, and so inflexible in its conduct, that whenever it exists it will, yea, must, exert an influence on the society in which it is placed. But has this character ever been realised, so as to exert an appreciable influence? Yes, it has existed and made itself felt wherever Christianity has been properly received by its followers; and whatever the world may have thought of Christian doctrine, it has had but one opinion respecting such a character. Pagan, semi-pagan, or civilised, if it has seen no divinity in the truth presented, it has been compelled to to recognise a force in the character lived, as pointing to the believers of different periods, it has said, "See, how these Christians live!" It was thus that the early Christians, not only by "well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," but "won" over to Christian doctrine those who had been its most inveterate foes. Yes, in those times men might safely read Christianity in the lives of its professors. When one of such characters was once plying his heathen servant with arguments to prove the doctrine of human sinfulness, the servant replied that his master might say what he pleased, but he could never believe that doctrine to be true, because, in all the years he had served his master, he had never seen any depravity in him. How many similar characters exist in the present day? Has there not come over the Church a general deterioration of Christian character? Has it not sunk so much to the level of a merely conventional morality as to lose the contrast which gave to it its natural force? Instead of there being a general striving to become as holy as the grace of God can make us, is

there not rather a clinging to as much imperfection as we deem consistent with a state of salvation? How rarely do we meet with a *telling* character! With one which reminds you of Him who is at once the master of Christian thought, and the model of Christian conduct. Heedless of the pernicious influence of a mediocre standard, we make the imperfections of others excuses for our own, and wink at the unchristian conduct of professors, lest the reply should meet us, "Physical heal thyself." Oh, my brethren, let us not shut our eyes to these things. The evil lies like an incubus on the Christian Church; if we overlook it, the world will not. The inconsistencies of Christian professors arm it with its strongest objections to Christian truth, and unless Christian character becomes raised in its tone by reviving grace, the only difference between the world and the Church will soon be merely one of opinion; and what is that but saying that it will make the Church injurious rather than useful? for if history has any truth—if past experience is at all reliable—then I say they both prove to us that Christian doctrine, unaccompanied by Christian character, has ever been to the world a curse, rather than a blessing.

4. *The alienation of the poor as a class from Christian teaching* is an additional evidence of our need of a revival. It is true that the mere fact of any class of men holding back from Christian influence is no special proof of the Church having degenerated, because the natural state of men's minds is hostility to the Gospel; and in saying, therefore, of any class that it has no sympathy for Christian institutions, is to say that that class needs what all others do—converting grace. But there seems something so radically wrong in the present aspect of what is called the working class, in relation to the Church, that whilst I do not believe in the scripturalness of class salvation, as I never did in the honesty of class legislation, and though I have no desire to speak of one class at the expense of another, I cannot help feeling that the Church has failed to imitate our Saviour in His treatment of the working classes of His day. No one can help recognising the peculiar relation sustained by the early Church towards the poor; the common people heard Christ gladly, while the wealthy and titled held aloof, maligned His character, and endeavoured to frustrate His plans. Christ's parting legacy was, "the poor ye have always with you;" and it was from that class, which everywhere represents the greatest number, that Christianity drew her early converts. So that, whether the apostles preached the Gospel at Jerusalem, Corinth, or Rome, it was true, that

"not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called;" but the poor did God choose to make rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom. This relation established by Christ, and continued by His apostles, continued for centuries, even after the Church had corrupted herself by the insane worship of wealth and nobility. There was always a friendlier tie, subsisting between her and the poor than the rich—she avowed her mission as a mediatrix between the oppressor and the oppressed—she was the poor man's benefactor, counsellor, and friend; and every sanctuary she erected between the feudal castle of the lord and the humble cot of the serf, was a standing type of what she professed to be—the representative of her Divine Master, who, as if to correct the spirit of caste, so dear to human nature, came, as the son of a carpenter, and lived without an income or a home. What does all this mean, if it is not to teach us that, while all men are welcome to Christian teaching and spiritual blessings, God has in religion, as in other matters, cared for the happiness of the greatest number? But how is it that the Church has lost her hold on the masses of our countrymen? Why is it that the relation once sustained by the poor is now, nominally at least, sustained by the rich? We have no desire to step beyond the requirements of truth; but we cannot shut our eyes to the fact, that a want of Christ-like sympathy for the poor—an over-conservatism on political matters—a craving for respectability in, as well as out of the Church, have largely contributed to effect this undesirable result; and if this be the case, do we not need reviving by being baptised afresh with the spirit of the meek and lowly Saviour? We may seek to heal the breach by efforts which the world believes to be prompted rather by a sense of danger than from genuine sympathy; but Ragged Schools, poor Men's Churches, City Missions, useful and nobly supported as they are, will never accomplish by themselves the work they aim at; they will merely play about the surface of the ulcer we have created, without going deep enough to effect a cure. No, dear brethren; we must be revived again. We need to put on Him afresh, who, although rich, "yet for our sake's became poor."

5. *The disparity between the results of Christian efforts and the instrumentalities employed*, is another reason why we need a revival. This is an age of organised movement. In whatever department of activity men labour, they seek the achievement of great results by combination—by bringing to a focus the powers of an almost preternaturally developed intellect and science, in order to bear on the evil they wish

to remove, or to attain that which is the desideratum of their union. Nor has the Church been wanting in this particular. She is replete with instrumentalities,—organised movement is the law of her activity. Societies spring up within her with marvellous celerity. Never, never was there so much of machinery employed to accomplish the work which God has instrumentally committed to her. One feels as he reviews the ens of thousands of weekly religious services—the myriad copies of religious literature, pouring out periodically from the press—and the all but innumerable societies, plying their labours in various directions,—as one does in passing through a monster factory where the eye is bewildered by the extent and complexity, and the ear is stunned by the ceaseless hum, of the vast machinery. The similarity of feeling, however, goes no further; for in gazing upon that machinery, whose only object is the physical comfort of man, we are astonished as much at the *result* which it produces, as at the thing itself. Where do you find machinery of this description wearing itself out by abortive movement? What manufacturer is there who would be satisfied with his machinery simply because it is so costly, so expressive of human ingenuity? Is it not the profitable result of the expense and skill it has occasioned which he aims at realising, and for which the whole apparatus was constructed? And is it not a proof of something being wrong when *Christian* instrumentality not only produces small results, but that we too often look more at the machinery itself than for the result which it ought to secure? Where are the symptoms of the world's conversion? What proportion is there between the instrumentality and the success? How much more do we than keep up our numbers, lessened by occasional defections and ever-recurring deaths? But man's depravity is the reason why those instrumentalities are not more successful. Man's depravity! has he not always been depraved? Is he worse now than in apostolic times? And were not Christian movements successful then? But there was a remarkable effusion of the Spirit then. Truly, there was, and ever must be, to secure success to Christian effort; that Spirit, however, has not severed Himself from the Church. Nowhere in the New Testament do we read of a period to arrive when, apart from the defection of the Church, that Spirit will cease to bless the labours of Christian men in their endeavour to save the world? Oh, let us not make the sovereignty of God a palliation of our guilt in this matter. Depend upon it, that if Christian instrumentality has any meaning,—if it is not a solemn mockery before God and man,—then I say that an instrumentality unblessed by God is merely the mechanical activity of a Church which

has lost its spiritual status, and needs to pray, "Wilt thou not revive us again." And let none of us, dear brethren, cast the blame on his neighbour; it may be that each of us shares in the guilt. Have we walked before God in the warmth and integrity of our first love? Have we a name that we live while we are dead? Do we persist in singing the songs of Zion with unhallowed lips and unsanctified hearts? Are we holding back from our convictions, habitually grieving the Holy Spirit? Then with our prayer for a revival must be blended, Daniel's confession, "Confusion of face belongeth unto us, to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel that are near, and that are afar off, because of the trespasses which they have trespassed against the God of Israel."

II. OUR HOPE OF A REVIVAL.

"*Wilt thou not revive us again?*" This prayer is like the generality of David's—the prayer of faith and expectation. Some, in our day, imagining that the multiplicity of conversions would lessen their value by increasing their commonness, or supposing that God can only give His Spirit sovereignly by bestowing it parsimoniously, not only have no expectation of a revival, but feel no obligation to pray for it. Such is not our feeling regarding this matter. We are sincerely cherishing the hope that the Lord will indeed "revive us." Are we asked why that expectation is encouraged? We reply,

1. On the ground of *the interest which we know God takes in His Church*. God is the Founder, as He has been the Upholder, of the Church, and so far as it numbers among its members sincere believers in His Son, it is the Church "which He hath purchased with His own blood." It is the object of His special interest. "He loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." He that toucheth her, toucheth the apple of God's eye—that eye, which, in its watchings, never tires nor rests. Has he not promised to be with His people always, even unto the end of the world? and can we believe Him to be indifferent to Zion's spiritual condition? No, though she has fallen, that fall is not, will not be, total. Though, for our sins, He has in some measure left us to ourselves, we know the promise, "My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from thee." Were the Church a human institution, then, like all such, to retrograde would be to die out; for how rare are the cases in which a decaying human society becomes resuscitated. Men feel that the only course open on such occasions is to break up the system which is hastening to decay, and to reconcile themselves to the universal law which falls, sooner or later, on every human institution. Whoever

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anticipates the revival of such a system as Mahommedanism? There is no divinity in it—it is of the earth, earthy, and having lost its primitive force, its followers recognise the fatality of its coming dissolution. Not so with us. The Church is God's, not man's. There is a divinity that stirs within it, prophetic of the glorious future, and that association between the Church and the living God becomes the basis of our hope respecting a revival. It is not on the intelligence, activity, and eloquence of our ministers; not on the wealth, number, and social influence of our members; not on any special efforts we may make to better our present state, but on the safest of all hopeful grounds,—the reality of the Divine interest in the Christian Church.

2. We hope for a revival *because revivals are not uncommon events in the history of the Church*. Had the law of the Church's movements been one of bare and gradual increase; had she always been creeping at the back of society with a tardy pace; had her greatest effort only been sufficient to keep up her numbers,—we might have been content to smother our hopes respecting a revival. But this has not been the case; in expecting such an event to take place, we are resting our hopes on the experience of the past, for we have precedents to guide and encourage us. If a revival be a miracle of grace, it is one which the Church and the world have been familiar with. The Church's extremity has ever proved to be God's opportunity. The history of the Jewish Church is replete with accounts of religious awakenings. It was not by gradual and silent growth that the Christian Church became in numbers and influence what it was in the early centuries, but, by a series of remarkable movements, forcing themselves on the attention, and contributing to the salvation of the world. She was ushered into existence by the most remarkable of all revivals, produced by the effusion of the Divine Spirit. Have not events similar in character, though perhaps less in extent, occurred in successive periods of her subsequent history? What quarter of the world is there where the Church has not at some period in her history experienced that which we are now hoping for? and just as our experience leads us to look beyond the midnight for the dawn of the coming day—even so, the preceding and succeeding condition of the Church in the days of Luther, Knox, Wesley, Edwards, and those more recent times when God has not allowed any human initials to blend with His own imprimatur, should lead us to expect the revival which we need as much, if not more, than they. But we have not experienced them. Truly, but our experience is not the measure of probability, nor should our want of experience respecting a revival make us conten..

ted with our present condition. Contented we may be with what we are, if we do not believe in the probability of a better state, as a man who had never seen nature in her spring life and loveliness, walking in winter amid a vegetation denuded of its flower, fruits, and foliage. He might discover in such a scene much to admire. The graceful form of the trees; the golden-hued whiteness of the hills on which the sun shines, and over which the snow mantles; the picturesque appearance of the frozen torrent, jutting from the mountain side in the same shape as when its liquid leap was arrested by the congealing touch of winter,—all this might satisfy him, but if he had ever seen or believed in the power which a spring sun has to fill the circle of nature with forms of life and scenes of beauty, think you he would be satisfied in winter without hoping for a more genial sun? It is just so, that from the experience of the past of what good revivals have effected, we are dissatisfied with the present state of the Church; and because God has graciously revived it in former times, we *hope* for revival in our own.

3. We hope for a revival *because the present state of things appears symptomatic of its coming*. So far as we can judge God never bestows an important blessing until He has prepared the way for its proper reception; and that preparation seems universally to be a sense of want, so that when it is given it may be valued, and the goodness of the Donor appreciated. As the God of Providence, the Awakener of human thought, the Giver of human genius, the Director of social progress, why did He not bestow upon men in early periods those discoveries which in later times have contributed so much to social weal? Why is it that the compass the press, and the discoveries of the true principles of science and the many inventions which have done man so much good, have been confined to the later period of human history? The only answer is, that the world was only prepared for them at the period when they were discovered: had they been known before, they would have been undervalued and wasted, but coming, as they did, so opportunely, just when the world needed them, we not only value them more, but are taught more impressively to recognise His hand in bestowing them. It is more truly so in spiritual matters; God only gives His grace as He prepares men to receive it; and what is that preparation but awakening us to a consciousness of how much we need it? And is not God forcing upon us the conviction that we require a revival to meet our present state? What means that cry which has been lifted up for months past, for an earnest ministry? Why is it that such singular attempts have been made to preach the Gospel to the general neglecter of our sanc-

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tuaries? Why has the spirit of prayer come down on at least some of our churches? Why has that great movement in America occurred just at the very time we needed a similar one? And is there no meaning in these things? Will God awaken a desire which He does not intend to satisfy? Will He not "avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto Him?" But these symptoms are not general! True, we admit and deplore the fact; but has God ever waited for all His people to ask Him for a general blessing ere He granted it? Has He not told us that the fervent, effectual prayer of one righteous man availeth much? How many disciples, think you, there were in that upper room at Jerusalem, praying day after day until the Spirit was poured out from on high? Our hope rests, not on the fact of Christians generally praying for a revival, but on the sincerity of those who do thus pray; and though I believe that if the revival comes, Christians will be afraid to hold back in this matter, my hope of a revival rests on what is now going on on a small scale, and which seems to indicate the speedy answer of David's hopeful prayer, "Wilt thou not revive us again."

III. THE VALUE OF A REVIVAL.

"That thy people may rejoice in thee." It is impossible for us to compute the true value of a general revival of religion. Men have been found capable of estimating the advantages resulting from that awakening of European intellect which occurred in the sixteenth century, when the human mind, dormant for ages, shook itself like Samson from the fetters by which priestcraft, despotism, and ignorance had bound it. We are referred to the liberal institutions, the spread of intelligence, and the scientific discoveries of the present day, as the sum-total of its value. But who can estimate the real worth of a religious revival, produced by the gracious presence of the Eternal Spirit? its proper estimate is too high, we cannot attain unto it. Nevertheless we may speak of that which we believe constitutes a portion of its value.

1. A genuine revival *increases the amount of Christian evidences.* The experimental evidence of Christianity is admitted to be the strongest and most conclusive argument for its divinity. The man who feels "the powers of the world to come," can very well do without "Butler's Analogy," "Watson's Apology," or "Paley's Evidences," because he has "the witness in himself." Now it is true that this evidence is only conclusive to him who experiences it, and that as he cannot transfer that experience, that which may be evidential of the Gospel's divinity to him, will be destitute of force to others. Still, as the experience of conversion in a man's inner nature will always give a

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Christian character to his outer conduct, if men of the world cannot feel the change wrought in him, they cannot avoid seeing the external effects of that change; and those outward effects in a Christian's character and life are in themselves a strong confirmation of the *divinity* of Christianity. So that men who see the Church barely making its way through society by an occasional accession of members, and, looking at Christian character, discover in it little if any more than they themselves possess, are deprived of the most powerful argument in favour of the Divine origin of the Church, and learn to regard it as a mere human thing, instead of being introduced and sustained by the power of God. But what an impressive evidence of its divinity does a revival present! The sight of thousands of our fellow-creatures arrested in a career of materialism, licentiousness, or scepticism, and induced to become spiritual, holy, and believing! To see this work repeated in thousands of instances, as in America at the present time; to see it done without any human agency at all adequate to the effect produced; to see it done, in many cases, by the instrumentality of the very means which men have for years either neglected or despised; to stand in that hall in New York, surrounded by three thousand business men in the midst of a business day in the very centre of commercial activity; to stand amid the crowd assembled there, not to be thrilled by human oratory or excited by political animus, but to join in penitential prayer; to stand there where one said that the only suggestion of the scene was the Day of Judgment;—what is it but to feel that religion is not a thing of opinion merely, but one of Almighty Power? In a declining state of the Church, worldly men may manifest an indifference to religious subjects—nay, may imitate those who mocked the preachers of the day of Pentecost, saying—"These men are filled with new wine;" but as that ridicule gave place to seriousness when they witnessed the conversion of three thousand men, "and fear came upon every soul," even so the direct result of a general revival is to spread a universal seriousness and solemnity through the community, because it brings the world's conscience (for a time at least) in contact with a sense of the presence of God.

2. A genuine revival will *deepen the piety and stimulate the liberality of the Church*. It must be so, for what is it to be revived but to be restored to that state from whence we have fallen? What is the reviviscency of nature which we have seen going on before our eyes, during the last few weeks? Has it not been the release of the soil from the cold embrace of the winter—the removal of the incumbrances which had

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kept the powers of vegetation in a state of inaction? Spring confers no new power of growth on the soil, as link after link of the ice chain of winter melts away under the radiance of a genial sun. Our eyes are gladdened, not by new forms of life and beauty, but by the restoration of the powers of life to their wonted play. Not startling us by strange sights of vegetable existence, but filling us with joy by the presence of the familiar flowers and verdure of the past. It is just so with a revival. It will bring no phenomena of a new creation, but restore to us the earnest piety and fraternal kindness which the early Church and every believer, at his conversion, experienced,—spiritual ardour, love to Christ, love to each other, love to all men. Oh, what days of grace when these things shall be brought within the general experience of our Churches! When our affection to the Saviour shall shape itself in self-denying obedience; when our liberality to His cause shall lose its proverbial stintedness; when the Bible shall have regained its power of charming us, and our sectarian prejudices shall have melted away by one mighty God-given, Christ-like, overpowering display of Christian love.

3. A genuine revival will *augment the number of Christian converts*. Though it begin in the Church, it will not end there. Like the Nile, whose course of a thousand miles contributes fertility as well as beauty to the country it traverses, the world's spiritual condition has been made dependent on that of the Church: and as that noble river, when fed by the melted snows and gushing springs of the mountains, rises in its bed, fringes its margin with verdure, and overspreads its banks with what to a parched soil is a water of life, even so a revived Church becomes a blessing to the world. We have never heard of a revival during which there were not "added to the Church such as should be saved;" and when it has been general, the numbers of the converted have been counted by tens, if not hundreds, of thousands. And shall we who profess to believe that the salvation of one soul is beyond all imaginable value—shall we, who believe that the salvation of that one soul awakens rapture in heaven—that it makes the Redeemer's diadem sparkle with a fresh gem,—shall we undervalue the revival we so much need, so pregnant with good to the world, and which, I believe, we have reason to expect?

Beloved, let us give ourselves to the consideration of this subject, which demands, at the present time, the most earnest thought and effort on the part of Christian men. Nothing less than a wicked indifference can shut out the conviction that we need a revival. The

THE COMING REVIVAL.

only question that can possibly agitate our minds is, respecting the possibility of securing it, and that is settled for ever in the Bible, which reveals its Author as a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God—which assures us of His continual interest in the welfare of His Church—and which proclaims His immutable purpose respecting her universal triumph in the future. Look at the world, lying in the arms of the wicked one—look at the unconverted families of Christian professors—look at the limited success of Christian institutions, and let that urge you to Christian duty. By the worth of immortal souls—by the fearful destiny of the lost, and the glorious future of the saved—by the condition of the world—by the state of the Church—and, above all, by the glory of the Saviour,—I beseech you to put away every evil thing, and so to pray as to “give Him no rest till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

THE WORLD, LIFE, AND DEATH.

A Sermon*

BY THE REV. JOHN CAIRD,

(Of Glasgow.)

"All things are your's; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's."—1 Corinthians iii. 21, 22.

PASSING from the general view of the subject, I shall now endeavour to illustrate the assertion, "all things are yours," by adverting to one or two of the special blessings here enumerated, as constituting parts of the Christian's universal inheritance. I shall take as specimens these three,—*"The World," "Life," "Death,"*

1. In what sense, to take the first of these, may the Christian understand the announcement—"the World is yours?" Not, obviously, in the literal sense of the words. This earth is not the exclusive property of the good. Christians are not, of necessity, lords of its soil or possessors of its wealth. It was not *their* Master, but another, who, displaying "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," said, "All these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." As often as otherwise the rich in faith are poor in this world's possessions. Many a one, "of whom the world was not worthy," never owned a hand's-breadth of its soil, till he possessed that which to the veriest wretch is not denied—a grave. Of the purest, noblest, best of the sons of men, it is written, that often "he had not where to lay his head;" and even that last resting-place to which his marred and bleeding form was borne, the hand of charity bestowed. No! not literally can it be said to Christ's followers on earth, "The world is yours."

But if not literally, yet in this sense may the world be said to belong to the Christian, that he only has a legitimate title to the benefits and blessings he enjoys in it. This earth was not meant to be the home of evil. The make and structure of the world is for good. Nothing in it, save by abuse, has any affinity with sin. Its foundations were not laid of old by Omnipotence, nor its wondrous laws contrived and ordered by Infinite Wisdom, nor its garniture of beauty spread over it by the loving

* The above is a portion of a Sermon extracted from a Volume of Mr. Caird's, recently Published by Messrs. Blackwood and Sons.

hand of God, only that a luxurious home might be provided for selfishness and impurity. God's sun was not created to shine, nor his rain to fall, nor his seasons made in orderly course to return, and all the processes contrived by which nature yields up her annual abundance, only that it might be poured into the lap of folly, and prolong the existence of ingratitude and vice. Even mute and material things, the laws and agencies of nature, have in them something that asserts their Divine origin, and proclaims that wrong is done to them—that they are in an unnatural and distorted condition—when forced into the service of sin. How exquisite, for instance, is that mechanism which we are at this moment employing, by which thought embodied in articulate sounds goes forth upon the viewless air, and by its invisible agency is conveyed from the preacher's lips to the ears, and so to the minds of his auditory ! What mechanism contrived by human art can compare with God's mechanism of speech and sound ? And when this wondrous engine is compelled to carry hither and thither words of selfishness, and malice, and unkindness—when it is laden with the swearer's oath, or the slanderer's lie—when it is forced to hurry on, burdened with impurities and blasphemies—is it employed for its destined end, is it rightfully used, or not rather fearfully perverted and abused ? Or, again, that agency of light, the mode of whose operation is still, with all its unvarying beauty and simplicity, an unsolved problem to human science—is it employed legitimately, and in accordance with the ends for which it was contrived, when on its tremulous ether, or its luminous waves, it is constrained to carry to and fro angry looks, lascivious glances, reflected sights and scenes of impurity and evil ? It were blasphemy to suppose that the Almighty should send down angels to convey hither and thither messages of impurity, or to lend their potent aid to deeds of crime ; yet are not "the winds God's messengers—the flaming fire his ministers," as truly as "the angels that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word ?" And as with these, so with all the other powers and agents which constitute the material system around us ; are they not all obviously designed to harmonize with, and subserve, the higher moral order of God's world ? If, therefore, you are living a godless and sinful life, you are out of harmony with the world in which you live. You exist in it by sufferance, not by right,—an intruder on its soil, a misappropriator of its benefits, a usurper and perverter of its laws. Nature and her laws and agencies do not serve you willingly, but as the captive servants of a gracious master, compelled to do the bidding of his enemy, only because "for a season" they have been "subjected to the bondage of corruption." And so long as you continue in estrangement from God, it is as if his sun

were unwilling to shine upon you, and his air to inspire you, and the fruits of his earth to nourish you, and the earth itself to hold you, and as if "the whole creation," weary of a bondage so degrading, were according to the magnificent conception of the apostle, "groaning and travailling in pain."

On the other hand, return to God, let your soul be brought back into living union with the Father of spirits through his dear Son, and thenceforward the world will become yours, because you are God's. In harmony with the Great Centre, you will be in harmony with all things in his universe. Nature will serve him who serves her God; and all her varied powers and agencies will rejoice to obey the behests and minister to the welfare of one who is the loved and loving child of their Great Master and Lord. The earth will be fulfilling its proper function in yielding you bread, and the heavens in shedding their sweet influences on your path. For you the morning will dawn and the evening descend. For you "the winds will blow, earth rest, heavens move, and fountains flow." You will be able to claim a peculiar property in the works of your Father's hand, and the bounties of your Father's providence. You will have served yourself heir to him who is the Universal Proprietor, and become "heir of God, and joint heir with Christ." And so "the world" and the fulness thereof will become "yours," because "ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

2. Another of the blessings comprehended in the roll of the Christian's possessions is "Life." What, then, let us ask, is the import of the declaration, "Life is yours?" It is obvious that in the simplest view of it, considered as mere existence or duration of being, "life" cannot, any more than the former blessing, be regarded as the peculiar property of the Christian. For though it is true that religion, by reason of the moral habits which it inculcates, is really conducive to health and longevity, and that, in the absence of its restraints, vicious excess often impairs the health and shortens life, yet this is by no means so uniformly its result as to warrant, in the literal import of the words, the assertion of the text. It is not always the holiest men who live the longest. Oftentimes "the good die first, whilst they who are as dry summer's dust burn in the socket." There is something more than mere sentimentality to the saying not seldom heard from sorrowing lips concerning the dead, that they were "too good for this world"—"they grew so holy, so gentle, so good," is the thought implied—"they breathed so much of the spirit of heaven upon earth, that, long ere to human eye their course was run, the Father called them home." And perhaps there are few of us who, as life wears on, do not learn to cherish among our deepest and most sacred

recollections the memory of some loved and sainted one, some child, or brother, or sister departed, whose fair young face shines out to us, in thoughtful moments, from amidst the dim and vanquished years, as that of one whom God hath early taken. No! we repeat, not literally can they who are Christ's understand the promise, "Life is yours."

But there is a sense most real and true in which they *may* apprehend it. For if the good do not live longer, they live *more* in the same space of time than other men. Life is to be reckoned not only extensively, but also intensively; not merely, by the number of its days, but also by the amount of thought and energy which we infuse into them. Existence is not to be measured by mere duration. An oak lives for centuries, generation after generation of mortals the meanwhile passing away; but who would exchange for the life of a plant, though protracted for ages, a single day of the existence of a living, conscious, thinking man? The briefest life of rationality, again, is worth more, has more real life in it, than the longest of a mere animal. And, amongst rational beings, that life is longest, whether brief or protracted its outward term, into which the largest amount of mind, of mental and moral activity, is condensed. It is possible for the longest life to be really briefer than the shortest, and the child or the youth may die older, with more of life crowded into his brief existence, than he whose dull and stagnant being drags on to an inglorious old age.

"We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.

We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

But if it be so, surely, estimating life by this principle, it is only the Christian, the man who lives to God, who can really be said to live at all. For in him alone the whole man lives—in him alone all the energies of man's being, physical, intellectual, moral, are called into fullest, noblest activity. In sleep we possess mere existence as truly as in waking, but in so far as our nobler conscious being is concerned, sleep steals away a great part of our earthly life: and if, instead of part, a man were compelled to spend the whole of life in sleep, then as a conscious, reflective, active being, life would be utterly lost to him. But there are men not a few in whose busy outward life, though the intellect may wake, the spirit slumbers, and who, amidst all the surface vivacity of a worldly and selfish existence, know as little of truest, noblest life, as if their years were spent in torpid unconsciousness. The man who merely vegetates through existence, who rises day by day only to eat and drink and pursue the same unreflective round of business and pleasure, without one lofty thought or pure

spiritual emotion, never for one moment lifting his soul to commune with God, and the vast world of invisible realities around him,—surely, to such an one, life, in its real essence, its true significance, is lost. And comparing such a life with that of the man in whom the pulse of being beats quick—the reflective, earnest, high-souled man, alive to the noblest end of existence, governed by high principles and holy motives, crowding his days with deeds, and leaving scarce one hour of waking existence that is not instinct with energy, throbbing with the life's-blood of the spirit—comparing the former sort of life with this, can we hesitate to pronounce that *that* is a mere blank, a life that is no life, a death in life, whilst *this* alone deserves the name? The man of property, who has an undiscovered gold mine on his estate, is no richer for his latent wealth, and cannot be said really to possess it. And so, whatever other men contrive to extract out of life—as comfort, ease, honour, knowledge, power—they are, after all, possessors only of its surface wealth; the Christian alone, the man who has discovered and appropriated its hidden treasure of holy thought, feeling, energy, who has pierced down through life's common strata, and reached the divine element in it—he alone can be said to be its true possessor. Confine a bird for life to a cage, and could it be said to be in reality possessor of the unexercised, unenjoyed power to soar and sweep the heavens? But within every human breast there are capabilities of heaven, folded wings of thought, aspiration, energy, which need only the liberating touch of the Spirit of God to call forth their hidden power, and bear the soul upward to the true region of its life. The true ideal of man's life is that of a heavenly life, a "life hid with Christ in God," the life of one whose "conversation is in heaven," who is "risen with Christ, and made to dwell with him in heavenly places," and who, even amidst the common duties of the world, derives his motives and principles from a nobler sphere of being. But the multitudes who never, in thought, desire, affection, emerge beyond the region of earthly things—such men know not what life is, have never discovered what, in its high and glorious reality, a human existence may become. To that man only who can say with the apostle, "To me to live is Christ," can we make answer in the full significance of the words, Then, "life is yours."

3. And if so, then finally may we add with the inspired writer in the text, "Death," too, "is yours." Outwardly, indeed, death bears the same aspect to all. He comes in no gentler form, with no more obsequious mien, to those who are Christ's, than to those who are none of his. But yet, whilst of all other men it may be said that they are death's, of the believer alone can it be averred that death is his. Sin, unrepented and unforgiven, renders a man, in a sense, the rightful property of death,

so that, when the hour of dissolution arrives, it is but the lawful proprietor coming to claim his own. In human society, a man forfeits by the commission of a crime his right to liberty. His person, by right, if not in fact, is the property of the law; and wherever he can be found, the emissary of justice may lay hold of the offender, and claim him as his own. The crime may be concealed, or the criminal may elude for a while the hands of justice; but, go where he may, he has no right to liberty or life—he is at the mercy of the offended law, wherever he can be detected. And when at last, it may be in some unwary moment, and after long-continued impunity has lulled him into forgetfulness of the past, he feels a stern hand laid upon his shoulder, and the terrible words, ‘You are my prisoner,’ fall upon his ear,—what sense of weakness and helplessness sinks heavily on his spirit! His guilty freedom is at an end. His game is up. A mighty power of human law and social order environs him. Resistance he knows to be unavailing; and though shrinking in dismay from the fate that awaits him, go he must with the officer of justice to meet it.

Now, similar to this is the condition of the irreligious and impenitent man in relation to that law which he has dishonoured, and that dread penalty which he has incurred. Unrepented sin is death's pledge. However long death may delay, he will come—soon at the latest—to put in force the right he has established over the person of the sinner, and to claim him as his own. Every day that dawns, every passing hour, every throb of the pulse, is bringing him nearer. Every sickness, every sorrow, every sign of nature's decay, each secret pang of conscience, or momentary foreboding that visits the sinner's soul, is as the shadow of the emissary of heaven's justice falling athwart his victim's onward path. And then, when at last he comes, often most silently and suddenly,—cold, stern, rigid, inexorable, God's awful messenger, there is that within the guilty breast which at once recognises his identity, and makes the man feel that resistance or escape is impossible. *Then*, indeed, is the hour and power of death, ~~then~~ the season of his long-delayed triumph, and of the appropriation of his rightful property. A power mightier than the combined force of human law, and social order, and public opinion, lays hold of the guilty soul, prevents its escape, hurries it resistlessly away to the bar of its Judge. Oh, who can tell what dreary sense of weakness visits the heart in that awful moment—what mysterious consciousness of being borne helplessly onward from the old, friendly, familiar world, into the strange, portentous dark of eternity! Who can enter into that feeling of amazed, awestruck impotence and abandonment with which the soul realises the thought: “This is Death at last, and ah me, I am his!”

On the other hand, if you are Christ's, then death is yours. His power over you is gone. He has no right to detain you in his possession. In his hands you shall no more be the weak, but the strong; for your condition will be analogous to that, not of the criminal, but of the innocent, unjustly apprehended man, in the hands of the law. Over the innocent man the law has no power. All its authority, its sanctions, its penalties, are on his side. Its retributive inflictions cannot touch him; they may not injure one hair of his head. He is no longer theirs, but they are his. If wrongfully accused and imprisoned, he can demand as a right all the aids and appliances of justice to free his character from stain and his person from unrighteous restraint. Or if he himself be incapacitated from action, his friends, if they can establish his innocence, may demand his person at the hands of the law—may insist on his instant liberation. And so, if "ye are Christ's," if, reconciled to God through his dear Son, the stain of guilt no longer rests upon you; then has death no longer any claim to your person, any right to retain you in his hold. It may be still your mysterious fate to submit for a little while to the universal penalty, to pass into the prison-house of the destroyer; but he to whom, body and soul you truly belong, will soon claim you as one who, like himself, cannot be "holden of death," and who must, at his summons, be set free. Not one soul dear to Christ, will he permit to remain as death's prisoner, or to receive any injury at death's hands. Nay, the very dust of Christ's saints is dear to him. He guards their very graves with a deeper and tenderer care than that wherewith earthly affection watches over the spot where a loved one rests. And as the slightest memorial of one who has been taken from us is often prized and kept with fondest interest, so even the frail vesture with which the soul of one of Christ's redeemed was once clothed, is precious to his heart, and he will rescue it at last from the dust where it lies soiled and dishonoured. "Neither death nor life, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come"—no created power, no lapse of time, no material change or revolution—can remove you from the sight, or separate you from the omnipotent love of Jesus. At his omnific word, death and the grave shall one day yield up their unlawful captives; and then, when the grave has heard the voice of the Son of God, and death, his servant and yours, has delivered up, unscathed, unharmed—yea, more glorious and beautiful than when they fell for a while into his charge, the bodies of Christ's redeemed, when "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality," then shall the believer discover the full and blessed import of the words, "Death is yours."

Be this, then, let me say in conclusion, your comfort and strength

amidst the passing hours of life, and when anticipating its inevitable close. If ye are Christ's in earnest heartfelt self-devotion, in the entire surrender of yourselves to him who hath redeemed you by his precious blood, then indeed "death is yours." It may not be that, when he draws near to you, death shall be welcomed with rapture, or even regarded without shrinking and dread. At the best, his is never a sweet face, nor is it a sound to which mortal ear can listen calmly when his step is heard on the threshold, or his knock strikes the door. But if you are Christ's, there is that in your condition which may well mitigate the fear, as it will ultimately triumph over the power of death. Death comes at Christ's command to call the believer to himself; and grim and ghastly though be the look of the messenger, surely that may well be forgotten in the sweetness of the message he brings. Death comes to set the spirit free; and rude though be the hand that knocks off the fetters, and painful though be the process of liberation, what need the prisoner care for that, when it is to freedom, life, home, he is about to be emancipated? Death strikes the hour of the soul's everlasting espousals, and though the sound may be a harsh one, what matters that? To common ear it may seem a death-knell, to the ear of faith it is a bridal peal. "Now," may the fainting passing soul reflect, "now my Lord is coming, I go to meet him—to be with Jesus—to dwell with him in everlasting light and love—to be severed from him no more for ever. O death, lead thou me on!" Or, if frail nature should faint and fail in that awful hour, surely this may be its strong consolation, the thought that even in the article of dissolution, he to whom the soul belongs is near and close beside it, to sustain the fortitude of his servant, and shield him in the last alarms. "The night falls dark upon my spirit; I tremble to go forth into that awful mystery and gloom; help, Lord, for my spirit faileth,"—is this the cry of its passing anguish? "Fear not," will be the sweet response that falls upon the inner ear—"Fear not, I am with thee; the night is far spent, the day is at hand; a little moment, and the shadows shall flee away for ever!" "O death!" may not then the dying saint, rising into the magnanimity of his glorious faith, exclaim—"O death, I fear thee not; I am not thine, but thou art mine! Thanks be to God that giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ my Lord."

The New Park Street Pulpit.

RIGHTEOUS HATRED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 8, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"Ye that love the Lord, hate evil."—Psalm xcvii. 10.

THE Christian religion is a golden chain with which the hands of men are fettered from all hatred. The spirit of Christ is love. Wherever he governs, love reigns as a necessary consequence. The Christian man is not allowed to hate any one. Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy; but I say unto you," said Jesus, "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." The word "hate" must be cut out of the language of a Christian, except it be used with one meaning and intention only, and that, the meaning of my text. Thou hast no right, O Christian, to tolerate within thy bosom wrath, malice, anger, harshness, or uncharitableness, towards any creature that God's hands have made. When thou hatest the man's sins, thou art not to hate him, but to love the sinner, even as Christ loved sinners and came to seek and save them. When thou hatest a man's false doctrine, thou art still to love the man, and hate his doctrine even out of love to his soul, with an earnest desire that he may be reclaimed from his error, and brought into the way of truth. Thou hast no right to exercise thy hatred upon any creature, however fallen or debased, however much he may irritate thy temper, or injure thee in thy estate or reputation. Still hatred is a power of manhood, and we believe that all powers of manhood are to be exercised, and may every one of them be exercised as in the fear of God. It is possible to be angry, and yet sin not, and it is possible to hate, and yet not be guilty of sin, but be positively performing a duty. Christian man, thou mayest have hatred in thy heart, if thou wilt only allow it to run in one stream, then it shall not do mischief, but it shall even do good—"Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." As much as the revengeful man hates his enemy, so much hate thou evil. As much as contending despots in battle hate one another, and only seek an opportunity to meet each other face to face, so hate thou evil. As much as hell hateth heaven, and as much as heaven hateth hell, so much mayest thou hate evil. The whole of that passion which, when let loose in a wrong track, becomes as a fierce lion on its prey, thou mayest keep in leash, (like a noble lion, only destitute of ferocity) against any whom it should not hurt, and thou mayest let it slip against the enemies of the Lord thy God and do great exploits thereby. Tell me of a man who is never angry, that man has not any true zeal for God. We must sometimes be angry against sin. When we see evil, though not vindictive against the persons who commit it, yet angry against the evil we must be; we must hate wickedness always. Doth not David say, "I hate them with a perfect hatred yea, I count them mine enemies." We are to love our enemies, but we are to hate God's enemies. We are to love sinners, but we are to hate sin. As much as it is in the power of man to hate, so much are we to hate evil in every form and fashion.

The duty here enjoined is a general one to all God's people. We are to hate *all* evil—not some evils. It was said, you know, long ago, of certain professors, that they did

“Compound for sins they were inclined to
By damning those they had no mind to.”

And there are some, I dare say, at this day, who think others extremely guilty for committing iniquities which they do not care to commit, but they themselves commit other sins with which they deal very gently. O Christian, never take hold of sin, except with a gauntlet on thy hand; never go to it with the kid-glove of friendship; never talk delicately of it; but always hate it in every shape. If it come to thee as a little fox, take heed of it, for it will spoil the grapes; if it come to thee as a warring lion, seeking whom it may devour; or if it come with the hug of a bear, seeking by a pretended affection to entice thee into sin, smite it, for its hug is death, and its clasp destruction. Sin of every kind thou art to war with—of lip, of hand, of heart. Sin, however gilded over with profit, however varnished with the seemliness of morality, however much it may be complimented by the great, or however popular it may be with the multitude; thou art to hate it everywhere, in all its disguises, every day in the week, and in every place. War to the knife with sin! We are to draw the sword, and throw away the scabbard. With all thy hosts, O hell, with every brat of thy offspring, O Satan, we are to be at enmity. Not one sin are we to spare, but against the whole are we to proclaim an utter and entire war of extermination.

In endeavouring to address you upon this subject, I shall first of all begin with it at home: *Christian man, hate all evil in thyself.* And then, secondly, we will let it go abroad: *Christian man, hate all evil in other people, wherever thou seest it.*

I. First, then, CHRISTIAN MAN, HATE ALL EVIL IN THYSELF. I will strive now to excite thy hate against it, and then I will try to urge thee and assist thee to destroy it.

Thou hast good reason to hate all evil; greater reason than ever the most injured man could bring forward for the hatred of his enemies. Consider what evil has already done thee. Oh! what a world of mischief sin has brought into thy heart! Sin stopped up your eyes, so that you could not see the beauty of the Saviour; it thrust its finger into your ears, so that you could not hear the sweet invitations of Jesus: sin turned your feet into the way of evil, and filled your hands with filthiness; nay, worse than that, sin poured poison into the very fountain of your being; it tainted your heart, and made it “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” Oh! what a creature thou wast when sin had done its utmost with thee, before Divine grace began to mend thee! Thou wast an heir of wrath even as others; thou didst “run with the multitude to do evil;” thy mouth was an “open sepulchre;” thou didst flatter with thy tongue, and there is nought that can be said of thy fellow-creature living in sin, that could not be said of thee. You must plead guilty to the charge, “such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” Oh! you have good cause for hating sin when you look back to the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged. Such mischief did evil do you that your soul would have been everlastingly lost, had not omnipotent love interfered to redeem you. Christian, hate evil. It has been your murderer; it has put its dagger to your heart; it has thrust poison into your mouth; it has done you all the mischief that hell itself could do—mischief which would have wrought your eternal undoing, had not the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ prevented. Thou hast good reason, then, to hate sin.

Again, Christian, hate evil, for it would be unbecoming if thou didst not when thou considerest thy position in life. A Christian belongs to the blood royal of the universe. Beggars' children may run about the street with unkempt hair and shoeless feet; but should princes of the blood revel in uncleanness? We do not expect to see monarchs' children apparelled in rags; we do not expect to see them rolling themselves in the mire of the streets. And thou, Christian, thou art one of God's aristocracy, a prince of the blood of heaven, a friend of angels, yea, and a friend of God. Good reason hast thou to hate all evil. Why, man, thou art a Nazarite, dedicated to God. Now, to the Nazarite it was enjoined that not only he should not drink wine, but he was not even to eat the grape, nor might he so much as taste

the bark of the vine, or anything whatsoever that grew upon it; he must neither touch nor handle it, or else he would be defiled. So is it with thee; thou art the Lord's Nazarite, set apart for himself. Avoid, then, every false way. Let the appearance of evil be kept from thee: it is beneath thy dignity to indulge in the sins which disgrace other men. Thou art not such as they are; thou art of a nobler race; thou hast sprung from the loins of the Son of God: is he not thine everlasting Father, even he who is the Prince of Peace? I beseech thee, never demean thy royal lineage, nor let thy holy ancestry be stained. You are a peculiar people, a royal generation; wherefore, then, should ye stain your garments in the dust. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil."

Again, you have good reason to hate sin, because *it weakens you*. Go when you have committed a folly, retire to your chamber and fall upon your knees in prayer. Before the sin was committed, your prayer reached the ear of God and the blessings came down swift as the lightning-flash; but now your knees are weak, your heart refuses to desire, and your tongue refuses to express the faint desires you strive to reach. You attempt, but you fail; you groan, but heaven is shut against your cry; you weep, but your tear penetrates not so as to obtain an answer from the breast of God. There you are; you bring your wants before the throne, and you carry them away again. Prayer becomes a painful duty instead of a most gracious and excellent privilege. This is the result of sin. "Sin will make thee leave off praying, or else praying will make thee leave off sinning." Oh! thou canst never be strong in sin and strong in prayer. As long as thou indulgest in lust, or sin, or wantonness of any kind, thy power in prayer is taken away, and thy lips are shut when thou attemptest to approach thy God. Or if thou wiltest, try another exercise: after committing a sin, go into the world and seek to do good. Why, man, thou canst not do it; thou hast lost the power to cleanse others when thou art impure thyself. What! can I with filthy fingers wash the face of others? Shall I essay to plough another man's field while my own is lying fallow, and the tall, rank thistle and weed are overspreading it? I am powerless to do good until I have first cleansed my own vessel and made that pure. An unholy minister must be an unsuccessful one, and an unholy Christian must be an unfruitful one. Unless thou desirest to have thy sinews loosed, to have the marrow of thy bones scorched from thee; unless thou wiltest that the sap of thy being should be dried up, I beseech thee, hate sin, for sin can debilitate and weaken thee so much that thou shalt drag along a miserable existence, the very skeleton of a soul, instead of flourishing in the ways of thy God. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil."

In the next place, you will find it extremely useful if, in order to get rid of sin, you are not content with merely restraining it, but always seeking to have it taken clean away by the Holy Spirit. You know, mere moralists restrain their sins, like a river that has locks and dykes: the water is kept from flowing, but then it gradually swells upward and upward, till by-and-bye it overflows with terrible fury. Now, don't be content with mere restraining grace; that will never purge you, for the sin may be there though it break not out. Pray to God that your sin may be taken away, and that though the remnant and the root thereof remain, though the channel be there, yet the stream may be dried up like the stream of the Euphrates before the presence of the Lord your God.

Again, ye have good reason to hate evil, for if you indulge in it *you will have to smart for it*. God will never kill his children; he has put his sword away; he sheathed that once for all in the breast of Christ, but he has a rod, and that rod sometimes he lays on with a very heavy hand, and maketh the whole body to tingle. The Lord will not be angry with his people so as to cast them off, but he will be so angry with them that they shall have to cry, "Heal the bones that thou hast broken, and restore my soul, O Lord my God." Ah! you that ever have backslidden, you know what it is to be well scourged; for when Christ's sheep run away from the shepherd he will not let them perish, but he will often allow the black dog to bring them back in his mouth; he will allow sore trouble and sharp affliction to lay hold upon them, so that they are cast down almost to the gates of hell. A Christian shall never be destroyed, but he shall almost be destroyed; his life shall not totally fail him, but he shall be so beaten and bruised that he shall scarcely know whether he has any life left in him at all. Hate sin, O Christian, unless thou desirest trouble. If thou wouldst strew thy path with thorns, and put nettles in thy death pillow, then live in sin; but if thou wouldst dwell in the heavenly places, hearing the everlasting chimes of Paradise ringing in thine own heart,

then walk in all the ways of holiness even unto the end. Christian man, hate evil.

So far, I have only addressed you selfishly; I have shown you how evil may hurt yourselves; now I will address you with another argument. Christian, hate evil; hate it in yourself, because evil in you will *do hurt to others*. What hurt the sin of a Christian does to the children of God! The sharpest trials God's church has ever had, has come from her own sons and daughters. I see her, I see her with her garments rent and defiled; I see her hands all bleeding, and her back scarred. O church of the living God, thou fairest among women, how art thou wounded! Where hast thou received these wounds? Has the infidel spit in thy face and reviled thee? Has the Arian rent thy garments? Has the Socinian cast filth upon the whiteness of thine apparel? Who hath wounded thy hands, and who hath scarred thy back? Hath this been done by the impious and profane? "No," saith she, "these are the wounds I have received in the house of my friends. Against my enemies I wear a secret armour, but my friends penetrate within it, and cut me to the very quick." The bishops of God's church, the professed leaders of the Lord's hosts, the pretended followers of the Redeemer, have done more damage to the church than all the church's enemies. If the church were not a divine thing, protected by God, she must have ceased to exist, merely through the failure and iniquity of her own professed friends. I do not wonder that the church of God survived martyrdom and death; but I do marvel that she has survived the unfaithfulness of her own children, and the cruel backsliding of her own members. O Christians, ye do not know how you cause God's name to be blasphemed, how you stain his church, and bring dishonour upon her escutcheon, when you indulge in sin. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil."

Again, hate it not only for the church's sake, but for the poor sinner's sake. How many sinners every year are driven away from all thought of religion by the inconsistency of professors! And have you ever noticed how the world always delights to chronicle the inconsistency of a professor? I saw only yesterday an account in the paper of a wretch who had committed lust, and it was said that "he had a very sanctified appearance." Ay, I thought, that is the way the press always likes to speak: but I very much question whether there are many editors that know what a sanctified appearance means; at least they will have to look a long time among their own class before they find many that have got much sanctification. However, the reporter put it down that the man had "a sanctified appearance;" and of course it was intended as a sling against all those who make a profession of religion, by making others believe that this man was a professor too. And really the world has had some grave cause for it, for we have seen professing Christians in these days that are an utter disgrace to Christianity, and there are things done in the name of Jesus Christ that it would be a shame to do in the name of Beelzebub. There are things done, too, by those who are accounted members of the church of our Lord Jesus, methinks, so shameful that Pandemonium itself would scarcely own them. The world has had much cause to complain of the church, O children of God, be careful. The world has a lynx eye: it will see your faults; it will be impossible to hide them; and it will magnify your faults. It will slander you if you have none; give it at least no ground to work upon; "let your garments be always white;" walk in the fear of the Lord, and let this be your daily prayer, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

Once more: I have one argument that methinks must touch your hearts and make you hate evil. You have a friend, the best friend you ever had. I know him, and have loved him, and he has loved me. There was a day, as I took my walks abroad, when I came hard by a spot for ever engraven upon my memory, for there I saw this friend, my best, my only friend, murdered. I stooped down in sad affright and looked at him. He was basely murdered. I saw that his hands had been pierced with rough iron nails, and his feet had been rent with the same. There was misery in his dead countenance so terrible that I scarcely dared to look upon it. His body was emaciated with hunger; his back was red with bloody scourges, and his brow had a circle of wounds about it: clearly could one see that these had been pierced by thorns. I shuddered, for I had known this friend full well. He never had a fault; he was the purest of the pure, the holiest of the holy. Who could have injured him? For he never injured any man: all his life long he "went about doing good;" he had healed the sick, he had fed the hungry, he had raised the dead: for which of these works did they kill him? He had never

breathed out anything else but love. And as I looked into the poor sorrowful face so full of agony and yet so full of love, I wondered who could have been a wretch so vile as to pierce hands like his. I said within myself "Where live these traitors? Where can they live? Who are these that could have smitten such an one as this?" Had they murdered an oppressor we might have forgiven them; had they slain one who had indulged in vice or villany, it might have been his due desert; had it been a murderer and a rebel, or one who had committed sedition, we would have said, "Bury his corpse: justice has at last given him his due." But when thou wast slain, my best, my only beloved, where lodged the traitors? Let me seize them, and they shall be put to death. If there be torments that I can devise, surely they shall endure them all. Oh! what jealousy; what revenge I felt! If I might but find these murderers what would I do with them! And as I looked upon that corpse I heard a footstep, and wondered where it was. I listened, and I clearly perceived that the murderer was close at hand. It was dark, and I groped about to find him. I found that somehow or other wherever I put my hand I could not meet with him, for he was nearer to me than my hand would go. At last I put my hand upon my breast. "I have thee now," said I; for lo! he was in my own heart; the murderer was hiding within my own bosom, dwelling in the recesses of my inmost soul. Ah! then I wept indeed, that I, in the very presence of my murdered Master, should be harbouring the murderer; and I felt myself most guilty while I bowed over his corpse and sung that plaintive hymn:

"Tware you my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were:
Each of my crimes became a nail
And unbelief the spear."

Revenge! revenge! Ye that fear the Lord, and love his name, take vengeance on your sins, and hate all evil.

Now, my beloved, my next endeavour must be to urge you to put your sins to death. What shall be done in order that you and I may get rid of our sins? There is the axe of the law; shall we bring that out and smite our sins with it? Alas! they will never die under the blow of Moses.

"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone."

I have often striven to overcome sin by the thought of the punishment attached to it; but I have very seldom found myself in a frame of mind in which my heart would receive that reason. I believe that to the most of us the terrors of the law, although they ought to be exceedingly terrible, have but little power to check us from sin. I met with a story the other day which showed me, if nothing else, the utter powerlessness of terror for curbing the heart from sin. It is pretended by some that it is necessary that men who commit murder should be capitally executed in order to deter others from crime. There is not, however I believe, the shadow of a hope that the execution of a murderer will ever produce any such effect. Three traitors were once executed in this country—Thistlewood was one of them,—and when the executioner smote off the head of the first man and held it up, saying, "this is the head of a traitor," there was a shudder running through the multitude, a chill, cold feeling which was perceptible even by the executioner. When he killed the next man, and held up the head in like manner, it was evidently looked upon with intense curiosity and awe, but with nothing like so much thrilling caution as the first. And strange to say, when the third head was smitten off, the man was about to hold it up, but he let it drop, and the crowd with one voice cried, "Aha! butter fingers!" and laughed. Would you have supposed that an English crowd, on seeing a poor man die, could have become so hardened in so short a time, as actually to have made a joke of such an incident? Yet so it is; law and terrors never do and never will produce any other effect than to drive men to sin and make them think lightly of it. I would not, therefore, advise a Christian, if he would get rid of his sins, to indulge continually in the thought of the punishment; but let him adopt a better process: let him go and sit down at the cross of Christ, and endeavour to draw evangelical repentance from the atonement which Christ has offered for our guilt. I know of no cure for sin in a Christian like an abundant intercourse with the Lord Jesus. Dwell much with him, and it is impossible for you to dwell much with sin. What!

my Lord Jesus, can I sit at the foot of that tree accursed, and see thy blood flowing for my guilt, and after that indulge in transgression? Yes, I may do it, for I am vile enough for anything; but still this shall be the great clog upon the wheel of my sin, and this repress my lust the most of all,—the thought that Jesus Christ hath lived and died for me.

Again, if you would check sin, endeavour to get as much light as you can upon it. The housewife, when she is busy about her house, with curtains drawn, she may have dusted all the tables, and think everything looks clean; but she opens a little corner of the window, and in streams a ray of light, in which ten thousand grains of dust are dancing up and down. "Ah!" she thinks, "my room is not so clean as I thought it was; here is dust where I thought there was none." Now, endeavour to get, not the farthing rushlight of your own judgment, but the sunlight of the Holy Spirit, streaming upon your heart, and it will help you to detect your sin—and detection of sin is half-way towards its cure. Look well at your transgressions and endeavour to find them out.

Yet another thing, when you have fallen into one sin make confession of it, and let that lead you to search for all the rest. David, you know, never wrote so abject a confession as he did after he had committed one act of sin; then he was led to search his heart, and find out all the rest of his iniquities, and he made a complete confession of them all. When thou seest one sin, be quite sure there is a host there, for they always hunt in packs; and take care when thou dischargest thy confession against one, that there is enough powder and shot in thy confession to wound all thy sins and send them limping away. Be not content with overcoming one sin or one transgression, but labour to get rid of all.

Again, there are many sins by which you will be enticed unless you always take care to strip sin of its disguises. Sin will sometimes come to you, wrapped up in a Babylonian garment, like Achan's wedge: pull the covering and you will discover its iniquity. It will sometimes come to you like the iniquity of king Saul, under the form of a sacrifice; strip it and discover that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. Alas! sin is like Jezebel; it attires its head and paints its face and appears lovely to us; unmask it, see its vileness, discover its filthiness, disdain the profit with which it gilds itself, take away the applause with which it endeavours to plume itself, and let it stand in all its naked deformity, and then thou wilt not be so likely to run into it.

Once again. Try always, when your mind is in a sanctified state, to estimate the weight of the evil of sin. When you are in a sinful state you will not feel the weight of the evil. A man that dives into the water may have a thousand tons of water above his head, and not feel the weight because the water is round about him; but take him out of the water, and if you put half a tubfull on his head, it presses him down. Now, while you indulge in sin, you will not feel its weight; but when you are out of sin, after it is over, and the Spirit has applied the blood of sprinkling for your forgiveness, and the sanctifying work of the Spirit has begun to restore you, then labour to realise the enormity of your guilt, and by so doing you will be helped to hate it and to overcome it.

With regard to some sins, if thou wouldst avoid them, take one piece of advice—run away from them. Sins of lust especially are never to be fought with, except after Joseph's way; and you know what Joseph did—he ran away. A French philosopher said, "Fly, fly, Telemache; there remains no way of conquest but by flight." The true soldiers of Christ's cross will stand foot to foot with any sin in the world except this; but here they turn their backs and fly, and then they become conquerors. "Flee fornication," said one of old, and there was wisdom in the counsel; there is no way of overcoming it but by flight. If the temptation attack thee, shut thine eye and stop thy ear, and away, away from it; for thou art only safe when thou art beyond sight and earshot. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil;" and endeavour with all your might to resist and overcome it in yourselves.

Once again, ye that love the Lord, if ye would keep from sin, seek always to have a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit, never trust yourselves a single day without having a fresh renewal of your piety before you go forth to the day's duties. We are never safe except we are in the Lord's hands. No Christian, be he who he may, or what he may, though he be renowned for his piety and prayerfulness, can exist a day without falling into great sin unless the Holy Spirit shall be his protector. Old master Dyer says, "Lock up your hearts by prayer every morning, and give God the key, so that nothing can get in; and then when thou unlockest thy heart

at night, there will be a sweet fragrance and perfume of love, joy, and holiness." Take care of that. It is only by the Spirit that you can be preserved from sin.

Above all, let us add, avoid all preachers who endeavour in any way to palliate sin; avoid all experiences and books of experience that give you a way of getting over the fact that the sin of God's people is a vile thing. I know some folks who talk of their sins as if they were proud of them; they speak of their falls, and their backslidings, and transgressions, as if they were blessed experiences: like the dog that had a bell round his neck because he was dangerous; they are proud of that very thing which is their shame. Remember, a nettle is bad anywhere, but it is never so bad as in a flower garden; and sin is bad anywhere, but never so hateful as in a Christian. If as you are going home to day you see a boy breaking windows, very likely you will speak to him; but if it is your own boy you will severely chastise him as sure as he is your own son. So likewise doth God deal with his people. When sinners do mischief he rebukes them; when his people do the same, he smites them. He will not pass over sin in his own children at any time; it shall never go unchastened. Ye that fear the Lord never palliate sin, for God will not do so; he hateth it with perfect hatred.

II. My second point is, HATE SIN IN OTHERS. Mark it, do not hate others, but hate sin in others. As we have only a few minutes left I will occupy them with but one or two practical remarks.

If you hate sin in others, it will be necessary for you *never in any way to countenance it*. There is many a Christian who does more mischief than he knows of by a smile. You have heard a young man telling a story of some of his freaks; perhaps it has been in a railway carriage, and he has been very witty, and you have smiled at him. He knows you, and he seems to think he has done a brave thing—didn't he make a Christian man smile at his sins? You have sometimes heard loose, lewd conversation proceeding from ungodly men, and you have not liked it; it has grated upon your ears; but you have sat very quietly, and others have said, "Ah, well, he was still enough; he was sucking it in, and it was clear he liked it." Thus it was stamped at once with the seal of your approbation. Now, never let sin have your countenance. Wherever you are, let it be known that you not only cannot endure it, but that you positively hate it. Don't let people say, "Well, I don't think he likes it;" but let them know you hate it, that you are absolutely angry with it, that you cannot smile at it, but feel your anger rise at the very mention of such shameful things. In the last century it used to be even fashionable and honourable to commit sins, which are now looked upon with scorn; and in another hundred years, some things that are done to-day will be discovered to be desperately vile, and we shall look upon them with disdain also. Christian, I say, never stamp another man's sins with approval.

Again, whenever you are called upon to do it—and that will be very often—take care to let your sentiments with regard to sin come out. Sinful silence may make you a partaker in a sinner's evil ways. If I saw a man breaking into a house, and I were going by late in the evening, if I passed very gently, knowing that he was doing wrong, and did not give the alarm, I think I should be an accomplice in the crime. And so, if you are sitting in company where there is evil speaking, or where Christ is blasphemed, if you do not say a word for your Master, you are committing sin in your silence, you are an accomplice in the iniquity. Speak up for your Lord and Master. What if you should get upbraided for it and be called a Puritan? It is a grand name. What if some should say, You are too precise? There is good need that some should be too precise where a great many are far too lax; or if they should never welcome you in their company again, it will be a great gain to be out of it. What if they should speak evil of you? Know you not that you are to rejoice in that day when they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for Christ's namesake? Always by your speaking boldly, let sin be put to the blush.

Then again, when you see evil in any one, always seek, if you see the slightest hope of doing good, for an opportunity of telling him privately of it. I have heard of a gentleman who was swearing, and a godly man who stood by, instead of upbraiding him for it, publicly said, "Sir, I wish to speak to you a moment." "Well," said the gentleman, "you had better come into the coffee-room." They went accordingly; and the godly man said to the other, "My dear friend, I noticed that you took the name of God in vain. I know you will excuse my mentioning it. I did not say a word about it when others could hear; but really it is a great sin,

and no profit can come from it. Could you not avoid it in future?" The check was thankfully received; the gentleman bowed his acknowledgments; he confessed that it was the fault of his early education, and he trusted that the rebuke might do him good. Do you not think that very often we lose an opportunity of showing our hatred of evil by not endeavouring privately to speak to those whom we discover indulging in sin? Never let slip an opportunity of having a shot at the devil, be it where it may; always let fly at him whenever you see him. If you cannot do it in public, yet if you see a man doing evil, rebuke him in private for his sin.

And yet another thing. If you hate evil, do not get into it yourself, because it is of no use your talking to others about evil unless your own life be blameless. They that live in glass houses must not throw stones. Get out of your own glass house, and then throw as many as you like. Speak to other people, when you have first of all endeavoured to set your own life according to the compass of the Gospel.

And now, beloved fellow-men, all of you who love the Saviour, are exhorted this morning to hate evil; and I will just enlarge once more upon this exhortation. Join heart and hand in the hatred of evil, with all men who seek to put it down. Wherever you see a society endeavouring to do good, encourage it. Let this be your doctrine—preach nothing up but Christ, and nothing down but evil. Help all those that are for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom. There is nothing else that can put evil away so quickly as the proclamation of right. Help the minister of the Gospel; pray for him; hold up his hands; endeavour to strengthen him. As for yourself, become a tract distributor, a Sunday-school teacher, or a village preacher. Show your hatred to evil by active efforts in putting it down. Distribute Bibles, scatter the Word of God broadcast over the land. Send your missionaries to foreign parts, and let them penetrate the dens and alleys of London. Go among the rags and filth of our own population, and seek to bring some one or two of the Lord's precious jewels who are hidden in the dunghills of the metropolis. Thus, let the Lord Jesus Christ by your means get the victory, and let the evil of this world be cast out. How shall that be done, but by the combined exertions of all Christ's church? In these days we have a great many men to fight Christ's battles, if they would but fight. Our churches are increasing at a great rate. There are an immense number of Christians now alive; but I think I would rather have the one hundred and twenty men that were in the upper chamber at the day of Pentecost, than I would have the whole lot of you. I do think those one hundred and twenty men had got more blood in them, more divine Christian blood and zeal, than as many millions of such poor creatures as we are. Why, in those days every member of the church was a missionary. The women did not preach, it is true; but they did what is better than preaching, they lived out the Gospel; and all the men had something to say. They did not leave it as you do to your minister, serving God by proxy; they did not set deacons up, and leave them to do all God's work while they folded their arms. Oh! no; all Christ's soldiers went to battle. There was no drafting out one or two of them, and then leaving the others to tarry at home and share the spoil. No; every one fought, and great was the victory. Now, beloved Christians, all of you, at it, and always at it. O Spirit of the living God, descend on every heart, and bid every one of thy soldiers take his sword in his hand, and go straightway up to the victory. For when Zion's children shall feel their individual responsibility, then shall come the day of her triumph. Then shall the walls of Jericho fall flat to the ground, and every soldier of the living God shall be crowned a conqueror. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil," henceforth and for ever.

The Preacher.

No. XLIX.

ACCEPTABLE FASTING.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 4, 1857,

BY THE REV. T. DALE, A.M.,

(Canon Residentiary,)

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, LONDON.

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh."—Isaiah lviii. 6, 7.

WE gather from these words, my brethren, that it is not every fast that the Lord God hath chosen; nay, it is not every fast ordained by an earthly sovereign that is appointed and accredited by the King of kings. Much depends on the purpose for which such a solemnity is appointed, and much also on the manner in which it is observed. A solemn fast was once proclaimed in the name of the king of Israel; but it was designed to cloak hypocrisy and iniquity, it was designed to condemn an innocent man as a blasphemer of his God, and a traitor to his king—whose sole offence was the possession of a vineyard which the rapacious monarch coveted as his own. "They proclaimed a fast," says the sacred historian, "among the people." "But wilt thou call this an acceptable day unto the Lord?" Again, in our Lord's own generation there were men who habitually made a parade of abstinence and humiliation; practising, or professing to practise privations and austerities, not with a view to sanctify the soul and subdue the flesh, but to obtain for themselves credit among men; disfiguring their faces that they might appear unto men to fast. And while they thus paid "tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin," the minor observances of the law, they depreciated its weightier matters, judgment, and mercy, and faith. "But wilt thou call this a fast and an acceptable day unto the Lord?" My brethren, the mortification and affliction of the body profiteth nothing unless it be

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accompanied with the prostration of the heart. Nay, the duties and obligations of such solemnity as that for which we are now called upon to prepare, are not only negative but positive; they involve the practice of benevolence, the expression of sympathy as well as the abasement of self, as well as the abandonment of sin. "Is not this the fast I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward."

Two things, then, are most important to be considered by us in our common relation as loyal subjects, true patriots, and professing Christians. First, the reasons for which a solemn fast has been enjoined upon us, and then the manner in which it ought to be solemnized and kept by ourselves. May God in his mercy enable us all so to perform the duty that we may be also partakers of the blessing through Jesus Christ.

I. First, then, we are to consider the reasons for which, on the part of our rulers, the solemn fast has been proclaimed. And we will take the first of these reasons—and it is a high privilege that we can take the first—from the declared principle and purpose of our Sovereign. "He that ruleth over men should be just," were the dying words of David, "ruling in the fear of God." And those who know not how to use flattering titles, and who are conscious that in so doing their Maker would soon take them away, may yet safely congratulate themselves and others, that they behold in their Sovereign very much of what the expiring David desired to see in his son and successor, Solomon—so much of impartial justice, so much of discriminating benevolence, so much of sympathetic mercy, so much of fear of the Lord. We take the document, therefore, which is put forth by the special command of our anointed and beloved Sovereign, to indicate, literally and precisely, what the terms of it convey: "That we and our people"—those are the royal words—"together humble ourselves before Almighty God in order to obtain pardon of our sins; and, in the most devout and solemn manner, offer up our prayers and supplications to the Divine Majesty imploring his blessing and assistance on our arms for the restoration of tranquility." Now, this is both reasonable and scriptural. We are to ask not for triumphs over our enemies, not for vengeance on mutineers and homicides, but for the pardon of our sins; we are to implore at the Lord's hands, not the trophies of victory, still less the extension of empire, but the restoration of peace. Our Sovereign thus avows a belief—she calls upon all her subjects to adopt it for their own, that the Most High ruleth over the kings of men and disposes of them at his will; that nothing can be done upon earth, but he is the doer of it; that evil prevails through his permitting, as good returns from his relenting; and that where the visitation, be it sword, or famine, or pestilence, is from him, we can have no other resource or refuge but to humble ourselves individually and collectively under his Almighty hand. He is the Lord our God, his judgments are in all the earth. And now that his judgments are abroad upon ourselves, it is fitting that we should learn righteousness. Ours, indeed, are foreign foes, far less formidable than in-

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testine discords—but in both one and the other, there is a single way of escape, and you may learn it, as you may learn everything else that is spiritual and good, from the teaching of your mother the church, who hath taught you to pray—"Give peace in our time, O Lord, because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou O God." We may assume, therefore, that a solemn act of national humiliation, like that which is now announced, if it be rightly ordained—which none can question—and as far as it is rightly observed, may safely be counted, "A fast and an acceptable day unto the Lord," one which he will be graciously pleased to choose and approve.

But we may be confirmed in this view ; and find a second reason for the solemn observance of the day, from the testimony of Holy Scripture—that on every recorded occasion of a solemn national fast, the direct and immediate result has been a national deliverance. Thus Joshua and all Israel fasted on account of their disasters and unexpected discomfiture at Ai ; and that they were directed to the discovery of that accursed thing, which hung like a dead weight on the warrior's palsied arm, and made the heart of the strong man weak as the smoking flax or the bruised reed. When the multitude came out against Jehoshaphat and overspread the face of the earth, threatening the extinction and the annihilation of God's people," the king set his face to seek the Lord, and all his people with their little ones and their wives—for this is expressly marked—"fasted and prayed and were heard in that they feared." The wicked fled when no man pursued ; the embattled host breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and intent only upon plunder and prey, were discomfited without a single arm of flesh being raised against them ! Their carcasses laid upon the very plain they thought to desolate, and they of the household divided the spoil. Nay, as if to anticipate an objection, which might in after ages be raised, by men of little faith, that these deliverances were vouchsafed to the chosen people of God, to whom he was bound by covenant promises which had endured through many ages—we have an example of a fast which was "an acceptable day unto the Lord," in the instance of a nation who had sinned with a high hand, and on whose behalf it would seem that Mercy herself would scarcely interpose a plea ; yet, no sooner was the warning voice uplifted in the midst of the men of Nineveh, though he who uttered it was a stranger from a far country, arrayed, it may be, in the prophet's coarse apparel, and declaring only the coming overthrow, without pointing to any way of escape, than they hearkened, and trembled, and believed, and turned to God. They sanctified a fast, and called a solemn assembly, the king himself descended from his throne and laid prostrate in sackcloth and ashes, thus exemplifying the very language and the spirit of the proclamation that has been made to ourselves. In Nineveh—as I trust it will be in our own metropolis—all, from the highest to the lowest vied with each other in deep humiliation before God. Even in profligate Nineveh, this was a fast indeed, this was "an acceptable day unto the Lord." God saw their work, and heard their prayer ; he repented of the evil he said he would do unto them, and did it not. Is not this, then, my brethren, recorded for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come ? Will not the same merciful God, who did not despise or reject the humiliation of Nineveh accept that of Britain also ? And if the sceptical mind should still advance the plausible but fallacious inquiry, is then God like man that he should repent ? Is prayer endowed with power to control

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or influence the immutable! Are the purposes of the unchangeable to be altered or abrogated by prayer? Nay, we reply; but who shall presume to tell us what are his purposes? Who shall say, how far it may have been pre-ordained in the unfathomable mind, that the judgment provoked by transgression should be tempered by mercy, in answer to prayer? Who shall say that national penitence and humiliation may not have been predestined to arrest the fearful progress of the otherwise desolating flood? We admit the purpose of God, like his nature, is immutable; but who shall decide that it is not a portion of that purpose to avert punishment in consequence of prayer? We are not to judge of God by what he can do, or what he may do—such knowledge is far too high and wonderful for such as we—but we are to judge him by what he has done; and what he has done is this, he has again and again rescued devoted nations from impending ruin, in consequence of national humiliation. And if we turn to him, as now, before the danger has become imminent, and the prospect of deliverance, by all ordinary human agencies at least, beyond all reasonable hope, who does not see that it is the very fittest time to cast ourselves upon Divine providence, while yet human resources are abundant, and the arm of flesh in human judgment is yet strong. This is the time to adopt for our own the language of the Psalmist which we heard in the service of to-day—"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

For a last reason, however, we must look away from the aggregate; we must look away even from the sanctuary, from the solemn assembly; we must look into our own lives, and we must look through our own lives into our own hearts. For aught we can tell, a fire may even now be kindling which shall try every man's work of what sort it is. Let us, then, prepare for it by trial of our own; let us look well to the foundation on which we ourselves are building for eternity; let us examine into the sincerity of our faith, and into the stability of our hope, and into the grounds we have for believing "That if our earthly house of this tabernacle were suddenly or speedily dissolved, we should inherit a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." From whatever quarter, under whatever aspect the last fearful summoner may appear, it would avail us nothing that others should be saved if we were lost. Any national deliverance might consist with individual destruction! Oh, then, let us seek and insure, while we may, a refuge from the storm, a shelter from the heat, before the blast of the terrible one shall be as a storm against the wall. This done, our own eternal interests are secured—even though for three transgressions of Britain, and for four the Lord would not turn away the punishment thereof, even though the abominations which are rife and reeking in the midst of us should provoke him still to say—"Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

II. But in order to avert the judgments, we have too justly deserved, and to bear our part in that general act of penitence and humiliation, which can alone constitute a fast an acceptable day unto the Lord, let us now consider, secondly, the manner in which this day should be solemnized and kept. We are to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, with our lips, and I trust also with our hearts—and confess not only our own sins, but

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those of our country; we are to deprecate the exaction of the penalty which national transgressions have too justly deserved; we are to recognize the judgments of God which are now abroad, and we are also to recognize the peculiar features of the fast which the Lord hath chosen—to deal our bread to the hungry, to provide clothing for the naked, to recognize the bond of human fellowship in the destitute of our own flesh, and break off our iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. But this is not all, to bow down the head as a bulrush, to spread sackcloth and ashes about us, and to disfigure our faces that we may appear unto men to fast, more especially when the morning abstinence is indemnified by the evening's excess—this is not to make the day acceptable to the Lord. Let the whole day, as far as practicable, be God's; enter at dawn into thy closet, commune there with "thy Father which is in secret;" commune with thine own heart in thy chamber and be still. Let no larger portion of it be given to the repose, nor any larger measure of food to the refreshment of the body than shall suffice to keep its energies in full vigour for the weightier work of the soul. Let the main feature of that day's worship be confession of sin, and humiliation on account of it. Take a retrospect of the past, consider your ways; compare what you are with what you have been, and both with what you ought to be. If you find subject of thankfulness and encouragement in the retrospect of the past, give God the praise; if it be a source of humiliation and regret, still do not despond, still less despair, you may find—nay, I will venture to affirm you will find—much, far too much, if you find nothing worse, of time misspent, of opportunities unimproved, of purposes unfulfilled, of pledges unredeemed; you will find much of wilful offence, much of positive omission, much done that you ought not, much left undone that you ought to have done. But even if you look to sacrifices offered, to services attended, to duties performed, how many seeming prayers will be found to have been empty words! How many specious acts of devotion little better than mockery of God! How feebly have you endeavoured to render to him according to the benefits bestowed! How little concern have you manifested for the souls of those who are most near and dear to you! How little self-devotion and self-denial have you manifested when kind offices were to be rendered, when ministries of love were to be discharged, when consciences were to be awakened, when souls were to be won! Oh, sure am I that the very holiest here present, feeling himself beneath the eye of one to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secret can be hid, would be constrained, even if his very virtue were the test, to take for his own, the lowly deprecation of the Psalmist—"Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight can no man living be justified." He would be constrained to seek refuge from the contemplation of what he had done as well as what he had left undone, beneath the all-protecting, all-preserving, all-pervading righteousness of Christ.

Such confession, my brethren, such individual, national confession, if it be rightly made, will employ us no scant measure of time. But we ought not to confine our confession this day to that which is strictly personal. The prophet Daniel under somewhat different circumstances acknowledged and deplored the sin of his people, together with his own; and have not we cause to deplore the baseness of that righteousness which exalteth a nation—the presence and prevalence of that sin which is a reproach to any people!

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And where confession ends, intercession should begin. On this day, if ever, should we plead for all who have, so to speak, a chartered and covenanted interest in our prayers. We should pray for the nation at large; for the church of Christ, which is its bulwark and its stay; for our Sovereign the vicegerent of God, for all who are placed in authority, and invested therefore with proportionate responsibility—for the bishops and pastors of the church, those more especially among the latter, who minister to ourselves the word of life—for all who are connected with us by ties of consanguinity or even companionship. Parents, pray for your children, separately and singly, as though a blessing were dependent on the offering of the special prayer. Children, sons and daughters, repay the fond solicitude and tender love of your parents, by commending them earnestly and importunately to God; Christians remember all those who are connected with you by an affinity or acquaintance, who you believe to remember you in prayer, and still more those who, you have reason to believe, never remember in prayer, either you or themselves. More especially wherever you have a neighbour or connection in need, in sickness, or in any other kind of adversity, let them have an especial interest in your addresses to the throne of grace. Never is it more true than of the offering of intercessory prayer, 'that the liberal soul shall be made fat, and that he who watereth shall be watered also himself.' It must bring a blessing upon the suppliant, if not upon him for whom it is offered. St. Paul, himself, said that in every prayer of his for his converts, he made request with joy for their fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now. And, again, writing to the Thessalonians—"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." Not only did this great apostle thus intercede for others, but he earnestly entreated—as well may we your ministers—that all for whom he prayed, should pray for him, "Finally, brethren," he said, "pray for us that the word of God may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you." And abundant need, in these critical and troublous times, have we, both in the spirit and the object of the prayer, to prefer the same entreaty to our congregations, saying—"brethren pray for us." Such, then, as to our own immediate devotional exercise is the manner in which this day of national humiliation should be observed in the closet and the church.

But there is a duty which must not be altogether overlooked, beyond the limits of either—I mean the duty of self-denial, the duty of abstinence, if not from necessary food, at least, from all indulgence of appetite, from all pleasant bread, from all that ministers even to that chastened gratification, that tempered cheerfulness, which, at other times, is not unbecoming the Christian conversation and character. It is essential, however, that this self-denial should be exercised for the profiting of others, not our own. The

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objects to which it ought to have especial regard, are especially declared and defined in the text—"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" The offering of that holy day—and offerings will be received both after the morning and afternoon services, at the doors of this Cathedral, for such is the express recommendation of our bishop—the offering of this day, I say, if not a large, ought at least to be a universal contribution; and for this reason, every one, by the exercise of self-denial, ought to spare or save something, even from his bodily wants, and whatever is spared or saved ought to be devoted to the supply of human need and relief of human suffering. Not only must sin be confessed and repented of, not only must self be controlled and mortified, not only must penitence be expressed and embodied in prayer, but faith must be demonstrated by love. When the judgments of God are in the earth, the inhabitants thereof should learn to practice righteousness, for this is the way to gain multiplied prosperity, this is the way to restore and perpetuate peace! Oh, then, see to it, my brethren, that so far as individual efforts can affect that national welfare, you do your part alike by heart-felt devotion, by personal abstinence, by active sympathy, by a large hearted benevolence, to make this "a fast indeed, and a day acceptable unto the Lord." Even on behalf of the community to which he is attached, the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The very example of intercessory prayer, which is cited by the Apostle James for our imitation and encouragement, is one at which the heavens gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit. God wrought a miracle in answer to prayer; and if the days of miraculous interposition, by the reversal or suspension of, what are termed the laws of nature, are now ceased, does that afford any room to doubt that the Most High still, as of old, "ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth unto whomsoever he will?" And still he who giveth victory unto kings, "the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle?" And is it not true of our own imperial Britain, as it was of far-famed Babylon, that by him the greatness of Britain reacheth unto heaven, and her dominion unto the end of the earth? Oh, that she had provided for the lengthening of her tranquillity by the right employment of her privileges! Oh, that she had consecrated to her God all the abundance of the seed, and gathered unto him all the forces of the Gentiles! Oh, that she had unfurled the banner of the cross and lifted up the standard to the nations and given due honour to that name which is above every name, to which all the prophets bear witness that it is a light to the Gentiles, and salvation to the ends of the earth! But if it be impossible to retract the error, it is not too late to repent of it and repair it. Of these however—both the repentance that is

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needed, and of the manner in which that repentance should be proved—it will be more fitting to speak on that day, when we shall specially humble ourselves before our God, for responsibilities unrecognized, for mercies disregarded, for duties unperformed, for obligations unredeemed—and alas! that I should say it—for a gospel too often dishonoured, for a Saviour too often practically denied.

I will add no more, except that all who shall attend these consecrated courts, shall at least have an opportunity of expressing their sympathy with their distant fellow-countrymen, in the relief of children, who are fatherless, wives who are widows, those who were brought up delicately now desolate in the streets, those who were brought up in scarlet embracing dunghills—a work of philanthropy and mercy, in which our own metropolis, as it became her, nobly led the way. And Oh! that by drawing out our souls to the hungry and satisfying the afflicted soul, light may arise to us in the obscurity, and the hour of darkness become to us as the noonday! Oh, that the heart of Britain being humbled before God, as the heart of one man, she may yet be called, an instrument of Divine mercy, the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the paths to dwell in! Oh, that she may yet become, what she ought to have been during the whole century of her dominion, the voice that crieth in the wilderness, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway to our God.”

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE WAY OF SALVATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 15, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."—Acts iv. 12.

It is a very happy circumstance when the servants of God are able to turn everything to account in their ministry. Now, the apostle Peter was summoned before the priests and Sadducees, the chief of his nation, to answer for having restored a man who was lame from his mother's womb. Whilst accounting for this case of cure, or, if I may use the expression, for this case of temporal salvation, the apostle Peter had this thought suggested to him, "While I am accounting for the salvation of this man from lameness, I have now a fine opportunity of showing to these people, who otherwise will not listen to us, the way of the salvation of the soul." So he proceeds from the less to the greater, from the healing of a man's limb to the healing of a man's spirit; and having informed them once that it was through the name of Jesus Christ that the impotent man had been made whole, he now announces that salvation,—the great salvation, must be wrought by the selfsame means; "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

What a great word that word "salvation" is! It includes the cleansing of our conscience from all past guilt, the delivery of our soul from all those propensities to evil which now so strongly predominate in us; it takes in, in fact, the undoing of all that Adam did. Salvation is the total restoration of man from his fallen estate; and yet it is something more than that, for God's salvation fixes our standing more secure than it was before we fell. It finds us broken in pieces by the sin of our first parent, defiled, stained, accursed: it first heals our wounds, it removes our diseases, it takes away our curse, it puts our feet upon the rock Christ Jesus, and having thus done, at last it lifts our heads far above all principalities and powers, to be crowned for ever with Jesus Christ, the King of heaven. Some people, when they use the word "salvation," understand nothing more by it than deliverance from hell and admittance into heaven. Now, that is not salvation: those two things are the *effects* of salvation. We are redeemed from hell because we are saved, and we enter heaven because we have been saved beforehand. Our everlasting state is the

effect of salvation in this life. Salvation, it is true, includes all that, because salvation is the mother of it, and carrieth it within its bowels; but still it were wrong for us to imagine that that is all the meaning of the word. Salvation begins with us as wandering sheep; it follows us through all our mazy wanderings; it puts us on the shoulders of the shepherd; it carries us into the fold; it calls together the friends and the neighbours; it rejoices over us; it preserves us in that fold through life; and then at last it brings us to the green pastures of heaven, beside the still waters of bliss, where we lie down for ever, in the presence of the Chief Shepherd, never more to be disturbed.

Now our text tells us there is only one way of salvation. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." I shall take first of all *a negative truth taught* here, namely, that there is no salvation out of Christ; and then, secondly, *a positive truth inferred*, namely, that there is salvation in Jesus Christ whereby we must be saved.

I. First, then, A NEGATIVE FACT. "Neither is there salvation in any other." Did you ever notice the intolerance of God's religion? In olden times the heathen, who had different gods, all of them respected the gods of their neighbours. For instance, the king of Egypt would confess that the gods of Nineveh were true and real gods, and the prince of Babylon would acknowledge that the gods of the Philistines were true and real gods: but Jehovah, the God of Israel, put this as one of his first commandments, "Thou shalt have none other gods besides me;" and he would not allow them to pay the slightest possible respect to the gods of any other nation: "Thou shalt hew them in pieces, thou shalt break down their temples, and cut down their groves." All other nations were tolerant the one to the other, but the Jew could not be so. One part of his religion was, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God;" and as the consequence of his belief that there was but one God, and that that one God was Jehovah, he felt it his bounden duty to call all pretended gods by nicknames, to spit upon them, to treat them with contumely and contempt. Now the Christian religion, you observe, is just as intolerant as this. If you apply to a Brahmin to know the way of salvation, he will very likely tell you at once, that all persons who follow out their sincere religious convictions will undoubtedly be saved. "Here," says he, "are the Mohammedans; if they obey Mohammed, and sincerely believe what he has taught, without doubt, Alla will glorify them at last." And the Brahmin turns round upon the Christian missionary, and says, "What is the use of your bringing your Christianity here to disturb us? I tell you our religion is quite capable of carrying us to heaven, if we are faithful to it." Now just hear the text: how intolerant is the Christian religion! "Neither is there salvation in any other." The Brahmin may admit, that there is salvation in fifty religions besides his own; but we admit no such thing. There is no true salvation out of Jesus Christ. The gods of the heathens may approach us with their mock charity, and tell us that every man may follow out his own conscientious conviction and be saved. We reply—No such thing: there is no salvation in any other; "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Now, what do you suppose is the reason of this intolerance—if I may use the word again? I believe it is just because there is the truth both with the Jew and with the Christian. A thousand errors may live in peace with one another, but truth is the hammer that breaks them all in pieces. A hundred lying religions may sleep peaceably in one bed, but wherever the Christian religion goes as the truth, it is like a fire-brand, and it abideth nothing that is not more substantial than the wood, the hay, and the stubble of carnal error. All the gods of the heathen, and all other religions are born of hell, and therefore, being children of the same father, it would seem amiss that they should fall out, and chide, and fight; but the religion of Christ is a thing of God's—its pedigree is from on high, and, therefore, when once it is thrust into the midst of an ungodly and gainsaying generation, it hath neither peace, nor parley, nor treaty with them, for it is truth, and cannot afford to be yoked with error: it stands upon its own rights, and gives to error its due, declaring that it hath no salvation, but that in the truth, and in the truth alone, is salvation to be found.

Again, it is because we have here the sanction of God. It would be improper in any man who had invented a creed of his own, to state that all others must be damned who do not believe it; that would be an overweening censoriousness and bigotry, at which we might afford to smile; but since this religion of Christ is revealed from heaven itself, God, who is the author of all truth, hath a right to append to this truth the dreadful condition, that whoso rejecteth it shall perish without mercy; and in proclaiming that, apart from Christ, no man can be saved. We are not really intolerant, for we are but echoing the words of him that speaketh from heaven, and who declares, that cursed is the man who rejects this religion of Christ, seeing that there is no salvation out of him. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Now I hear one or two persons saying, "Do you imagine then, sir, that none are saved apart from Christ?" I reply, I don't imagine it, but I have it here in my text plainly taught. "Well but," saith one, "how is it concerning the death of infants? Do not infants die without actual sin? Are they saved? and if so, how?" I answer, saved they are beyond a doubt; all children dying in infancy are caught away to dwell in the third heaven of bliss for ever. But mark this—no infant was ever saved apart from the death of Christ. Christ Jesus hath with his blood bought all those who die in infancy; they are all regenerated, not in sprinkling, but probably in the instant of their death a marvellous change passes over them by the breathing of the Holy Spirit, the blood of Jesus is applied to them, and they are washed from all original corruption which they had inherited from their parents, and thus washed and cleansed they enter into the kingdom of heaven. Otherwise, beloved, infants would be unable to join in the everlasting song, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood." If infants were not washed in the blood of Christ, they could not join in that universal song which perpetually surrounds the throne of God. We believe that they are all saved—every one of them without exception—but not apart from the one great sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Another says, "But how about the heathen? They know

not Christ; are any of the heathen saved?" Mark, Holy Scripture saith but very little concerning the salvation of the heathen. There are many texts in Scripture which would lead us to infer that all the heathen perish; but there are some texts which, on the other hand, lead us to believe that there are some out of the heathen race who, led by God's secret spirit, are seeking after him in the dark, endeavouring to find out something they cannot discover in nature; and it may be that the God of infinite mercy who loves his creatures, is pleased to make to them these revelations in their own heart—dark and mysterious revelations concerning the things of heaven—so that even they may be made partakers of the blood of Jesus Christ, without having such an open vision as we have received, without beholding the cross visibly elevated, and Christ set forth crucified among them. It has been observed in many heathen lands, that before the missionaries have gone there there has been a strong desire after the religion of Christ. In the Sandwich Islands, before our missionaries went there, there was a strange commotion in the minds of those poor barbarians; they did not know what it was, but they were all on a sudden discontented with their idolatries, and had a longing desire after something higher, better, and purer, than anything they had hitherto discovered; and no sooner was Jesus Christ preached, than they willingly renounced all their idolatries, and laid hold upon him to be their strength and their salvation. Now, we believe this was the work of God's Spirit secretly inclining these poor creatures to seek after him; and we cannot tell but that in some sequestered spots where we had thought the gospel never has been preached, there may be some lone tract, some chapter of the Bible, some solitary verse of Holy Writ remembered, which may be sufficient to open blind eyes, and to guide poor benighted hearts to the foot of the cross of Christ. But this much is certain; no heathen, however moral—whether in the days of their old philosophy, or in the present time of their barbarism—ever did or ever could enter the kingdom of heaven apart from the name of Jesus Christ. "Neither is their salvation in any other." A man may seek after it and labour after it in his own way, but there he cannot possibly find it; "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

But after all, my dear friends, it is a great deal better, when we are dealing with these subjects, not to talk upon speculative matters, but to come home personally to ourselves. And let me now ask you this question, have you ever proved by experience the truth of this great negative fact, that there is no salvation in any other? I can speak what I do know, and testify what I have seen. When I solemnly declare in the presence of this congregation, that it is even so. Once I thought there was salvation in good works, and I laboured hard, and strove diligently to preserve a character for integrity and uprightness; but when the Spirit of God came into my heart, "sin revived and I died," that which I thought had been good proved to be evil; wherein I thought I had been holy I found myself to be unholy. I discovered that my very best actions were sinful, that my tears needed to be wept over, and that my very prayers needed God's forgiveness. I discovered that I was seeking after salvation by the works of the law, that I was doing all my good works from a selfish motive, namely to save myself, and therefore they could not be acceptable to God. I found out that I

could not be saved by good works for two very good reasons: first, I had not got any; and secondly, if I had any, they could not save me. After that I thought, surely salvation might be obtained, partly by reformation, and partly by trusting in Christ; so I laboured hard again, and thought if I added a few prayers here and there, a few tears of penitence, and a few vows of improvement, all would be well. But after fagging on for many a weary day, like a poor blind horse toiling round the mill, I found I had got no farther, for there was still the curse of God hanging over me: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them;" and there was still an aching void in my heart the world could never fill—a void of distress and care, for I was sorely troubled because I could not attain unto the rest which my soul desired. Have you tried those two ways of getting to heaven? If you have, I trust the Lord, the Holy Spirit, has made you heartily sick of them, for you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven by the right door, until you have first of all been led to confess that all the other doors are barred in your teeth. No man ever did come to God through the straight and narrow way until he had tried all the other ways; and when we find ourselves beaten, and foiled, and defeated, then it is, that pressed by sore necessity, we betake ourselves to the one open fountain, and there wash ourselves, and are made clean.

Perhaps I have in my presence this morning some who are trying to gain salvation by ceremonies. You have been baptized in your infancy; you regularly take the Lord's Supper; you attend your church or chapel; and if you knew any other ceremonies you would attend to them. Ah! my dear friends, all these things are as the chaff before the wind in the matter of salvation; they cannot help you one step towards acceptance in the person of Christ. As well might you labour to build your house with water, as to build salvation with such poor things as these. These are good enough for you when you are saved, but if you seek salvation in them, they shall be to your soul as wells without water, clouds without rain, and withered trees, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Whatever is your way of salvation—for there are a thousand different inventions of men whereby they seek to save themselves—whatever it may be, hear thou its death-knell tolled from this verse: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

II. Now, this brings me to the POSITIVE FACT which is inferred in the text, namely, that there is salvation in Jesus Christ. Surely, when I make that simple statement I might burst forth with the song of the angels, and say—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Here are a thousand mercies all bound up in one bundle, in this sweet, sweet fact, that there is salvation in Jesus Christ. I shall endeavour now merely to deal with any soul here present who entertains a doubt as to his own salvation in Jesus Christ; I shall single him out, and address him affectionately and earnestly, and endeavour to show him that he may yet be saved, and that in Christ there is salvation for him.

I know thee, sinner! Thou hast long been trying to find the road to heaven, and thou hast missed it. Hitherto thou hast had a thousand dazzling cheats to deceive.

thee, and never yet one solid ground of comfort for thy poor weary foot; and now, encompassed about by thy sins, thou art not able to look up. Guilt, like a heavy burden, is on thy back, and thy finger is on thy lip, for thou dardest not yet cry for pardon; thou art afraid to speak, lest out of thine own mouth thou shouldst be condemned. Satan whispers in thine ear, "It is all over with thee; there is no mercy for such as thou art: thou art condemned, and condemned thou must be; Christ is able to save many, but not to save thee." Poor soul! what shall I say unto thee but this—Come with me to the cross of Christ, and thou shalt there see something which shall remove thine unbelief. Seest thou that man nailed to yonder tree? Dost thou know his character? He is without spot or blemish, or any such thing: he was no thief, that he should die a felon's death: he was no murderer and no assassin, that he should be crucified between two malefactors. No; his original was pure, without a sin; and his life was holy, without a flaw. Out of his mouth there proceeded only blessing; his hands were full of good deeds, and his feet were swift for acts of mercy; his heart was white with holiness. There was nought in him that man could blame; even his enemies, when they sought to accuse him, found false witnesses, but even they "agreed not together." Dost thou see him dying? Sinner, there must be merit in the death of such a man as that; for without sin himself, when he is put to grief, it must be for other men's sins. God would not afflict and grieve him when he deserved it not. God is no tyrant that he should crush the innocent; he is not unholy that he should punish the righteous. He suffered, then, for the sins of others.

"For sins, not his own, he died to atone."

Think of the purity of Christ, and then see whether there is not salvation in him. Come now with thy blackness about thee, and look at his whiteness; come with thy defilement, and look at his purity; and as thou lookest at that purity, like the lily, and thou seest the crimson of his blood overflowing it, let this whisper be heard in thine ear,—he is able to save thee, sinner, inasmuch as though he was "tempted in all points like as we are," yet he was "without sin;" therefore, the merit of his blood must be great. Oh, may God help thee to believe on him!

But this is not the grand thing which should recommend him to thee. Remember, he who died upon the cross, was no less than the everlasting Son of God. Dost see him there? Come, turn thine eye once more to him. Seest thou his hands and feet trickling with streamlets of gore? That man is Almighty God. Those hands that are nailed to the tree, are hands that could shake the world; those feet that are there pierced have in them, if he willed to put it forth, a potency of strength that might make the mountains melt beneath their tread. That head, now bowed in anguish and in weakness, has in it the wisdom of the Godhead, and with its nod it could make the universe tremble. He who hangs upon the cross yonder, is he without whom was not anything made that was made: by him all things consist—Maker, Creator, Preserver, God of providence, and God of grace—he who died for thee is God over all, blessed for ever. And now, sinner, is there any power to save in such a Saviour as this? If he were a mere man, a Socinian's Christ, or an Arian's Christ, I would not bid thee trust him; but since he is none other than God himself incarnate in human flesh, I beseech thee cast thyself upon him;

"He is able,
He is willing, doubt no more."

"He is able to save unto the uttermost, them that come unto God by him."

Will you recollect again, as a further consolation for your faith that you may believe on him, that God the Father has accepted the sacrifice of Christ. It is the Father's anger that you have the most cause to dread. The Father is angry with you, for you have sinned, and he has sworn with an oath that he will punish you for your offences. Now, Jesus Christ was punished in the room, place, and stead of every sinner who hath repented, or ever shall repent. Jesus Christ stood as his substitute and scapegoat. God the Father hath accepted Christ in the stead of sinners. Oh, ought not this to lead you to accept him? If the Judge has accepted the sacrifice, sure you may accept it too; and if he be satisfied, sure you may be content also. If the creditor has written a full and free discharge; you, the poor debtor, may rejoice and believe that that discharge is satisfactory to you, because it is satisfactory to God. But do you ask me how I know that God has accepted Christ's atonement? I remind you that Christ rose again from the dead. Christ was put into the prison-house of the tomb after he died, and there he waited until God should have accepted the atonement.

"If Jesus ne'er had paid the debt,
He ne'er had been at freedom set."

Christ would have been in the tomb at this very day, if God had not accepted his atonement for our justification; but the Lord looked down from heaven, and he surveyed the work of Christ, and said within himself, "It is very good; it is enough;" and turning to an angel, he said, "Angel, my Son is confined in prison, a hostage for my elect; he has paid the price; I know he will not break the prison down himself; go, angel, go and roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and set him at liberty." Down flew the angel, and rolled away the massive stone; and rising from the shades of death the Saviour lived. "He died and rose again for our justification." Now, poor soul, thou seest God has accepted Christ; surely then, thou mayest accept him and believe on him.

Another argument, which may perhaps come nearer to thine own soul, is this—many have been saved who were as vile as thou art, and therefore there is salvation. "No," sayest thou, "none are so vile as I am." It is a mercy that thou thinkest so, but nevertheless it is quite certain that others have been saved, who have been as filthy as thyself. Have you been a persecutor? "Yes," you say. Ay, but you have not been more blood-thirsty than Saul! And yet that chief of sinners became the chief of saints. Have you been a swearer? Have you cursed the Almighty to his face? Ay; and such were some of us who now lift up our voices in prayer, and approach his throne with acceptance. Have you been a drunkard? Ay, and so have many of God's people been for many a day and many a year; but they have forsaken their filthiness, and they have turned unto the Lord with full purpose of heart. However great thy sin, I tell thee, man, there have been some saved as deep in sin as thou art. And if even none have been saved, who are such great sinners as thou art, so much the more reason why God should save thee, that he may go beyond all that he ever has done. The Lord always delights to be doing wonders; and if thou standest the chief of sinners, a little ahead of all the rest, I believe he will delight to save thee, that the wonders of his love and his grace may be the more manifestly known. Do you still say that you are the chief of sinners? I tell you I do not think it. The chief of sinners was saved years ago; that was the Apostle Paul: but even if you should exceed him, still that word "utmost" goes a little beyond you. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that

come unto God by him." Recollect, sinner, if thou dost not find salvation in Christ, it will be because thou dost not look for it, for it certainly is there. If thou shalt perish without being saved through the blood of Christ, it will not be through a want of power in that blood to save thee, but entirely through a want of will on thy part—even that thou wilt not believe on him, but dost wantonly and wilfully reject his blood to thine own destruction. Take heed to thyself, for as surely as there is salvation in none other, so surely there is salvation in him.

I could turn to you myself, and tell you that surely there must be salvation in Christ for you, since I have found salvation in Christ for myself. Often have I said, I will never doubt the salvation of any one, so long as I can but know that Christ has accepted me. Oh! how dark was my despair when I first sought his mercy seat, I thought then that if he had mercy on all the world, yet he would never have mercy on me; the sins of my childhood and my youth haunted me; I sought to get rid of them one by one, but I was caught as in an iron net of evil habits, and I could not overthrow them; and even when I could renounce my sin, yet the guilt still did cling to my garments—I could not wash myself clean; I prayed for three long years, I bent my knees in vain, and sought, but found no mercy. But, at last, blessed be his name, when I had given up all hope, and thought, that his swift anger would destroy me, and that the pit would open its mouth and swallow me up, then in the hour of my extremity did he manifest himself to me, and teach me to cast myself simply and wholly upon him. So shall it be with thee, only trust him, for there is salvation in him—rest assured of that.

To quicken thy diligence, however, I will conclude by noting that if you do not find salvation in Christ, remember you will never find it elsewhere. What a dreadful thing it will be for you if you should lose the salvation provided by Christ! For "how shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation?" To-day, very probably I am not speaking to very many of the grossest of sinners, yet I know I am speaking to some even of that class; but whether we are gross sinners or not, how fearful a thing it will be for us to die without first having found an interest in the Saviour! Oh sinner! this should quicken thee in going to the mercy seat; this thought, that if thou findest no mercy at the feet of Jesus, thou canst never find it anywhere else. If the gates of heaven shall never open to thee, remember there is no other gate that ever can be opened for thy salvation. If Christ refuse thee thou art refused; if his blood be not sprinkled on thee thou art lost indeed. Oh! if he keeps thee waiting a little while, still continue in prayer; it is worth waiting for, especially when thou hast this thought to keep thee waiting, namely, that there is none other, no other way, no other hope, no other ground of trust, no other refuge. There I see the gate of heaven, and if I must enter it, I must creep on my hands and knees, for it is a low gate; there I see it, it is a strait and narrow one, I must leave my sins behind me, and my proud righteousness, and I must creep in through that wicket. Come sinner, what sayest thou? Wilt thou go beyond this strait and narrow gate, or wilt thou despise eternal life and risk eternal bliss? Or wilt thou go through it humbly hoping that he who gave himself for thee will accept thee in himself, and save thee now, and save thee everlastingly?

May these few words have power to draw some to Christ, and I am content. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

“CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL.”

AN OPEN-AIR SERMON

PREACHED FROM THE STEPS OF

THE ROYAL EXCHANGE

LONDON,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, the 15th of AUGUST, 1858.

BY THE

REV. W. DUNCAN LONG, M.A.

(Incumbent of St. Paul's, Bermondsey.)

“For Christ is all, and in all.”—Colossians iii. 11.

LONDON:

JAMES PAUL, 1, CHAPTER HOUSE COURT,

NORTH SIDE ST. PAUL'S, AND PATERNOSTER ROW.

"CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL."

After a hymn and prayer the reverend gentleman addressed a congregation of about 700 from Colossians iii. 11 :—

"But Christ is all, and in all."

THIS text is often misquoted—"Christ is all in all." And although this is certainly true, it is not the full meaning of the passage, which contains two distinct ideas. First, Christ is *all*—all that a believer can possibly desire or require; and, secondly, Christ is *in* all—in all them that are his when regenerated by the Holy Spirit. In Romans (viii. 9,) it is said, "Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" that is, unless Christ dwell *in him* by his Spirit, he is none of his. Christ is said to dwell in people: God is said to dwell in people: the Holy Ghost is said to dwell in people. *God is said to dwell in people.* "I will dwell in them, and walk in them." "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." *Christ is said to dwell in people.* The Apostle prays, in writing to the Ephesians (iii. 17,) "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." And he speaks of travelling in birth again until Christ be formed in the Galatians the hope of glory. And in this Epistle he speaks of "Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." (Col. i. 27, 28.) *The Holy Spirit is said to dwell in people.* "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.)

We have then in the text—

I. The great subject matter—"Christ."

II. What Christ is said to be—"All, and in all."

I. First, then, we have the great subject-matter of the text—*Christ*. O how can I speak of him worthily, in all the beauties of his person, and in all the glories of his Deity! He is a Prophet, Priest, and King—He is the Anointed. Who anointed him? Wherewith was he anointed? What was he anointed for? We read in Isaiah (lxi. 1.) "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Addressing him, Jehovah

says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Heb. i. 8, 9.) For what purpose was he anointed? He was anointed to be a Prophet, Priest, and King to his church. He was anointed to be a Saviour—a Divine Saviour. Where was there a prophet like him? "Who teacheth like him?" The matter of his teaching was singular. It was the whole will of God for our salvation. The manner of his teaching was singular. While "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys." Again—"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." And not only was he anointed to be a Prophet, but anointed also to be a Priest. We read in Hebrews (v. 4—6.) that "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Think of the sacrifice he offered—his own sinless, spotless self. Think of his own intercession, grounded on his oblation. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. viii. 25.) But he is also anointed to be a King. "Yet have I set (that is anointed) my king upon my holy hill of Zion." (Psalm ii. 6.) He is "King of kings, and Lord of lords." "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." (1 Cor. xv. 25.) "But now we see not yet all things put under him." (Heb. ii. 8.) In the Book of Exodus there were particular directions given for compounding the anointing oil. It was sacred; none was to be made like it. It was used for anointing the tabernacle, the ark, the table, the vessels, the altar, and Aaron and his sons to the priest's office. Some were anointed to be prophets, some priests, and some kings; some prophets and priests, some priests and kings, some prophets and kings; but none to the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, but **THE CHRIST** of God. He was "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." (Heb. i. 3.)

Now this is but a very brief epitome of what might be said of the subject matter of the text—Christ. We have seen that he was anointed by the Father with the Spirit, and for what purpose he was anointed.

II. But there are two things said of him in the text. He is said to be "all, and in all." He is all in *creation*. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers: all things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Col. i. 16, 17.) "All things were made by him; and without him was

not anything made that was made." (John i. 3.) He is all in *providence*. He has "the keys of hell and of death." "He openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." "He upholds all things by the word of his power." "All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth." But it is principally with reference to the *new creation* that he is said to be "all" in the text. The apostle is speaking of the new man. He says, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all." (Col. iii. 9-11.) "There is neither Greek nor Jew:" the meaning is this, that in the *new man*—in the matter of salvation—in the *new birth*—in regeneration—*nation* has nothing to do with it, either to forward it or to hinder it. *Position* has nothing to do with it. Whether Jew or Greek, it makes no difference. "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God." (Rom. ii. 28, 29.) He may be a "Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free," but it makes no difference in the matter of salvation either to forward it or to hinder it. He may be a bondsman, like Onesimus, or a free man in a civil point of view. *Nation* or outward distinction has nothing to do with it, but in it, "Christ is all, and in all."

He is all in *reconciliation*. We are told in Colossians (i. 19-21,) "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of the cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled." He is all in *satisfaction*—in the payment of our debts, and the purchase of our persons. "He," (that is "God the Father,") "hath made him," (that is "Christ Jesus,") "to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) He is all in *justification*. "This is his name, whereby he shall be called the Lord our righteousness." "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." (Isa. xlv. 25.) He is all in *election*. He is the root of election. We were chosen in him; and for him, and given to him by the Father. He is all in *effectual calling*. "Who hath saved us," says St. Paul, in writing to Timothy, (2 Tim. i. 9,) "and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." He is all in *sanctification*. He "is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. i. 30.) He is all in *acceptance*.

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"He hath made us accepted in the beloved." He is all in *redemption*. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." He is all in *salvation*. He is the author of salvation. He says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God and there is none else." (Isa. xlv. 22.) Again, he says, (Isa. lxiii. 5,) "I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation." "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. i. 21.) "Neither," says St. Peter, "is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.) He is all in *regeneration*. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." He is all in the *proclamation of the everlasting gospel*. "We preach Christ crucified," says St. Paul, "unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. i. 23, 24.) He gives grace and gifts to preach. "Unto me," says St. Paul, "who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." (Eph. iii. 8.)

In a word, he is all *from* the Father, all *to* the Father, and all *with* the Father. He is all *from* the Father. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." He is all *to* the Father. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." He is all *with* the Father. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"—in whom I acquiesce. He is the only medium of conveyance. Yes, he *is* all; and whatever you want, you will find a supply of in him. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "It pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell." Do you need *cleansing*? Which of us does not? for "we are all as an unclean thing:" sinners by nature and practice. Well in Christ Jesus there is blood that cleanseth from all sin, even the greatest and foulest. "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John i. 7.) Do you want *clothing*? "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Christ has wrought out a perfect righteousness, which is unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference: "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Do you want *wisdom*? He is our wisdom. Do you want *strength*? He is our strength. Do you want *consolation*? He is emphatically called "the consolation of Israel." He is all, and his people are invited to receive of his fulness now; and hereafter he will be the all of that glory prepared for them. Their happiness will consist in being with him; enjoying his smile, and being devoted to his service. Well, then, may the Christian say, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him." I have in him everything I want by

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reason of his covenant engagements. The covenant of grace was made long before the covenant of works. It was entered into, for the church, with Christ, as their representative and spiritual head; of which covenant he became the Mediator. He became incarnate to fulfil its conditions, and sealed it with his blood. By this covenant he has undertaken to be all to his people. "I will be a God unto thee," was the original promise to Abraham; that is, I will give myself to thee; which includes every blessing in time and in eternity; every attribute of mine shall be for thy benefit. He is all, but he is in all. He is in his people. He dwells in them.

This mystical union between Christ and his church is frequently spoken of in Scripture. He is called the *Foundation*—his people the building. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "Ye are God's husbandry: ye are God's building." He is called the *Head*—his people the members. "He is the Head of the body, the church. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." He is called the *Vine*—his people the branches. "I am the vine, ye are the branches." There is a real union; a complete joining of the believer to the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot see it. I cannot give you a drawing of it. I can only tell you what God says of it. There is an actual, invisible union of the believer to Christ. "O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord." (Collect for All Saints' Day.) "We dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us." (Communion Service.)

Happy, then, is that individual who can say, 'I am Christ's. "I am my Beloved's, my Beloved is mine," and I am his.' But who are those who can use this language? We read of the men of the world, who have their portion in this life, and a wretched portion it is: but blessed is the man who can say, "The Lord is my portion." Who can say so? Surely this is an important inquiry. I will give you four marks by which you can discern whether Christ is all to you. (1.) Every person who has fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him in the gospel, who through the work of the Spirit on his heart, under a feeling sense of misery, makes *Christ* the object of his hope and confidence. Is any person asking, 'How can I know whether I am doing this?' Do you feel sin to be a dreadful evil, such as nothing but blood can wash away? Do you feel your sins to be so dreadful that nothing but the blood of Jesus can wash away the stain? Are you constantly going to him, and washing, as it were, in the fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness? If so, Christ is *your all*; and if Christ is your's, "All things are your's; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas. or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's. (1 Corinthians iii. 21—23.) (2.) Another mark is given by St. Peter, "Unto you, therefore, which believe he is *precious*." If Christ is precious to you, high in your esteem, if you love

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to have him exalted, if you view him as "God over all, blessed for evermore"—"the Lord God Omnipotent"—if you are never so gratified as when his ministers are exalting him, you may conclude that he is *yours*. You are one of his people. You are delighting in him, and can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." (Psalm lxxiii. 25.) Thou art my all. (3.) You are Christ's if you are resting on his finished work, and finding rest in him. This is a restless world we live in. We shall never find rest in the creature; but when you can say, "Christ is precious to me," *then* you shall find rest—rest from the lifting up of the light of his countenance upon you, which will produce more solid joy than all the prosperity of the worldling. (4.) You are his if you are determined to cleave to him *at all times*; if you are saying, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." "Lord to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ the Son of the living God."

But there are peculiar seasons when we need to realise these things, and the grand point is to bring them into constant practical experience. When called to any arduous duty, you feel your own insufficiency, and need wisdom and strength, go to Christ, and you shall receive all you need. When under suffering, trial, or loss, go to him, and he will enable you to bear it. When the last solemn trial arrives which awaits us all, even then you shall find that Christ is all.

We have wonderful instances of this in the word of God. Habakkuk, in the midst of great outward distress, said, (chap. iii. 17, 18,) "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." David said, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." (Psalm lxxiii. 26.) "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." In times of affliction, losses, or whatever trials you are called to undergo, remember *Christ is ever the same*. The same loving, gracious, faithful friend, the "friend that loveth at all times," "the brother born for adversity," "the friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Christ is ever the same. He will never leave nor forsake his people. He says, "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." See the view St. Paul took of trials. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.) "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans viii. 18.) O then, if any of you are afraid of coming to Christ, if your hearts are truly broken,

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with a sense of sin, 'tis he that has done it. Look to him. Rest your soul upon him. There is nothing to prevent any broken-hearted sinner from coming to him. He will never cast out any that come to him, nor suffer anything to separate them from him in time or eternity.

"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
He will not, he will not give up to his foes ;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
He will never, *no never*, NO NEVER forsake."

I must now, warned by the time, most unwillingly bring my observations to a close. I have spoken to you of *Christ*. I have told you that he "*is all and in all*." I have told you that there is a *real union* between him and the believer. I have given you the *marks* by which you may know whether he is all to you. O if there be any of you here anxious to know him, whom to know is life eternal, remember, Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John iv. 13, 14.) May God the eternal Spirit pour out *his* grace richly upon you. May he be all to you, and may he be in you all. May he write this sweet portion upon your hearts and mine, "Christ is all, and in all."

And now unto the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one Triune God be ascribed all the praise, power, dominion, and glory for ever and ever.

The service was closed with prayer and the benediction.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

"AS THY DAYS, SO SHALL THY STRENGTH BE."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 22, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be."—Deut. xxxiii. 25.

BELLOVED, it seems a sad thing that every *day* must die and be followed by a night. When we have seen the hills clad with verdure to their summit, and the seas laving their base with a silver glory; when we have stretched our eye far away, and have seen the widening prospect full of loveliness and beauty, we have felt sad that the sunlight should ever set upon such a scene, and that so much beauty should be shrouded in the oblivion of darkness. But how much reason have we to bless God for nights! for if it were not for nights how much of beauty never would be discovered. Never should I have considered the heavens, the work of thy fingers, O my God, if thou hadst not first covered the sun with a thick mantle of darkness: the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, had never been bright in mine eyes, if thou hadst not hidden the light of the sun and bidden him retire within the curtains of the west. Night seems to be the great friend of the stars: they must be all unseen by eyes of men, were they not set in the foil of darkness. It is even so with winter. We might feel sad, that all the flowers of summer must die, and all the fruits of autumn must be gathered into their store-house, that every tree must be stripped, and that all the fields must lose their fair flowers. But were it not for winter we should never see the glistening crystals of the snow; we should never behold the beauteous festoons of the icicles that hang from the eaves. Much of God's marvellous miracles of hoar frost must have been hidden from us, if it had not been for the cold chill of winter, which, when it robs us of one beauty, gives us another,—when it takes away the emerald of verdure, it gives us the diamond of ice—when it casts from us the bright rubies of the flowers, it gives us the fair, white ermine of snow. Well now, translate those two ideas, and you will see why it is that even our sin, our lost and ruined estate, has been made the means, in the hand of God, of manifesting to us the excellencies of his character. My dear friends, if you and I had been without trouble, we never could have had such a promise as this given to us:—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." It is our weakness that has made room for God to give us such a promise as this. Our sins make room for a Saviour; our frailties make room for the Holy Spirit to correct them; all our wanderings make room for the good Shepherd, that he may seek us and bring us back. We do not love nights, but we do love stars; we do not love weakness, but we do bless God for the promise that is to sustain us in our weakness; we do not admire winter, but we do admire the glittering snow; we must shudder at our own trembling weakness, but we still do bless God that we are weak because it makes room for the display of his own invincible strength in fulfilling such a promise as this.

In addressing you this morning, I shall first have to notice the *self-weakness* which is implied in our text; secondly, I shall come to the *great promise* of the text; and then I shall try and draw one or two inferences from it, ere I conclude.

No. 210.

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I. First, the SELF-WEAKNESS HINTED AT IN THE TEXT. To keep to my figure. If this promise be like a star, you know there is no seeing the stars in the day-time when we stand here upon the upper land; we must go down a deep well, and then we shall be able to discover them. Now, beloved, as this is day-time with our hearts, it will be necessary for us to go down the deep well of old recollections of our past trials and troubles. We must first get a good fair idea of the great depth of our own weakness, before we shall be able to behold the brightness of this rich and exceeding precious promise. A self-sufficient man can no more understand this promise, than a coal heaver can understand Greek: he has never been in a position in which to understand it; he has never learned his own need of another's strength, and therefore he cannot possibly understand the value of a promise which consists in giving to us a strength beyond our own. Let us for a few minutes consider our own weakness.

Ye children of God, have ye not proved your own weakness in the day of duty? The Lord has spoken to you, and he has said, "Son of man, run, and do such and such a thing which I bid thee;" and you have gone to do it, but as you have been upon your way, a sense of great responsibility has bowed you down, and you have been ready to turn back even at the outset, and to cry, "Send by whomsoever thou wilt send, but not by me." Reinforced by strength, you have gone to the duty, but while performing it, you have at times felt your hands hanging exceedingly heavy, and you have had to look up many a time and cry, "O Lord, give me more strength, for without thy strength this work must be unaccomplished; I cannot perform it myself." And when the work has been done, and you have looked back upon it, you have either been filled with amazement that it should have been done at all by so poor and weak a worm as yourself, or else you have been overcome with horror because you have been afraid the work was marred, like the vessel on the potter's wheel, by reason of your own want of skilfulness. I confess in my own position, I have a thousand causes to confess my own weakness every day. In preparing for the pulpit how often do we discover our weakness when a hundred texts exhibit themselves, and we know not which to choose; and when we have selected our subject, distracting thoughts come in, and when we would concentrate our minds upon some holy topic, we find they are carried hither and thither, driven about like the minds of children by every wind of thought. And when we bow our knees to seek the Lord's help before we preach, how often does our tongue refuse to give utterance to the earnestness of our hearts. And alas! how frequently too is our heart cold when we are about to enter upon an occupation which requires the heart to be hot like a furnace, and the lip to be burning like a live coal. Here in this pulpit I have often learned my weakness, when words have fled from me, and thoughts have departed too, and when that zeal which I thought would have poured itself forth like a cataract, has trickled forth in unwilling drops like a sullen stream, the source of which doth almost fail, and which seemeth itself as if it longed to be dried up and dead. And after preaching, how have I cast myself upon my bed, and tossed to and fro, groaning because I thought I had failed to deliver my message, and had not preached my Master's Word as my Master would have me preach it. All of you, in your own callings, I dare say, have had enough to prove that. I do not believe a Christian man can examine himself without finding every day that weakness is proven even in the doing of his duty. Your shop, however small, will be enough to prove to you your weakness; your business, however little, your cares, however light, your family, however small, will furnish you with enough proofs of the fact: "Without me ye can do nothing;" "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

But, beloved, we prove our weakness, perhaps more visibly, when we come into the day of *suffering*. There it is that we are weak indeed. I have sat by the side of those who have been exceedingly sick, and have marked their patience; but I do not know that I ever wondered at the patience of a sick man so much as I do when I am sick myself: then patience is an extraordinary virtue. Women suffer, and suffer well; but I do think there are very few men who could bear the tithe of the suffering that many women endure, without exhibiting a hundred times as much impatience. Most of us who are gifted with strong constitutions, and have but little of sickness, have to chasten ourselves, that what little sickness we have to contend with is borne with so little resignation and with so much impatience; that we are so ready to repine, so prepared to bow our heads and

wish we were dead, because a little pain is rending our body. Here it is that we prove our weakness indeed. Ah! people of God, it is one thing to talk about the furnace; it is another thing to be in it. It is one thing to look at the doctor's knife, but quite another thing to feel it. You will find it one thing to sip the cup of medicine, but quite another thing to lie in bed a dreary week or month, and to drink on, and on, and on, of that nauseating draught. When you are on dry land, most of you are good sailors; out at sea you are vastly different. There is many a man who makes a wonderfully brave soldier till he gets into the battle, and then he wishes himself miles away, and except his spurs there is no weapon he can use with much advantage. That man has never been sick who does not know his weakness, his want of patience, and of endurance.

Again, beloved, there is another thing which will very soon prove our weakness, if neither duty nor suffering will do it—namely, *progress*. You sit down to-morrow and you read the life of some eminent servant of God: perhaps the life of David Brainard, and how he gave up his life for his Master in the wilderness; or the heroic life of Henry Martin, and how he sacrificed all for Christ: and as you read you say within yourself, "I will endeavour to be like this man; I will seek to have his faith, his self-denial, his love to never-dying souls." Try and get them, beloved, and you will soon find your own weakness. I have sometimes thought I would try to have more faith, but I have found it very hard to keep as much as I had. I have thought, "I will love my Saviour more," and it was right that I should strive to do so; but when I sought to love him more I found that perhaps I was going backward instead of forward. How often do we find out our weakness when God answers our prayers!

"I ask'd the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of his salvation know,
And seek more earnestly his face.

I hop'd that in some favor'd hour
At once he'd answer my request,
And by his love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins, and give me rest."

Instead of this he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry power of hell
Assault my soul in every part.

'Lord, why is this?' I trembling cried,
'Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?'

'Tis in this way,' the Lord replied;
'I answer prayer for grace and faith.'

That is, the Lord helps us to grow downward when we are only thinking about growing upward. Let any of you try to grow in grace, and seek to run the heavenly race, and make a little progress, and you will soon find, in such a slippery road as that which we have to travel, that it is very hard to go one step forward, though remarkably easy to go a great many steps backward.

If neither of these three things will prove thy weakness, Christian, I will advise thee to try another. See what thou art in *temptation*. I have seen a tree in the forest that seemed to stand fast like a rock; I have stood beneath its wide-spreading branches, and have sought to shake its trunk, to see if I could, but it stood immovable. The sun shone upon it, and the rain descended, and many a winter's frost sprinkled its boughs with snow, but it still stood fast and firm. But one night there came a howling wind which swept through the forest, and the tree that seemed to stand so fast lay stretched along the ground, its gaunt arms which once were lifted up to heaven lying hopelessly broken, and the trunk snapped in twain. And so have I seen many a professor strong and mighty, and nothing seemed to move him; but I have seen the wind of persecution and temptation come against him, and I have heard him creak with murmuring, and at last have seen him break in apostasy, and he has lain along the ground a mournful specimen of what every man must become who maketh not the Lord his strength, and who relyeth not upon the Most High. "Ah!" says one, "I do not believe I could be tempted to sin." My friend,

it depends upon what kind of temptation it should be. "Here are many of us here who could not be tempted to drunkenness, and others who could not be tempted to lust." If the devil should set before some of you cups of the richest wines that ever came from the vintages of Burgundy or of Xeres, you would not care for them, if you did but sip them it would suffice you; it would be in vain to tempt you with the drunkard's song; nothing could induce you to lose your equilibrium by intoxicating liquors; but perhaps you are the very man whom a temptation of lust might overthrow. While there be other men whom neither lust nor wine can overcome, who may be led by a prospect of profit into that which is dishonest; and others again, whom neither profit, nor lust, nor wine, would turn aside, may be overthrown by anger, or envy, or malice. We have all our tender points. When Thetis dipped Achilles in the Styx, you remember she held him by the heel; he was made invulnerable wherever the water touched him, but his heel not being covered with the water, was vulnerable, and there Paris shot his arrow, and he died. It is even so with us. We may think that we are covered with virtue, till we are totally invulnerable, but we have a heel somewhere; there is a place where the arrow of the devil can make way; hence the absolute necessity of taking to ourselves "the whole armour of God," so that there may not be a solitary joint in the harness that shall be unprotected against the arrows of the devil. Satan is very crafty; he knows the ins and outs of manhood. There is many an old castle that has stood against every attack, but at last some traitor from within has gone without, and said "I know an old deserted passage, a subterranean back way, that has not been used for many a day. In such and such a field you will see an opening; clear away a heap of stones there, and I will lead you down the passage: you will then come to an old door, of which I have the key and I can let you in; and so by a back way I can lead you into the very heart of the citadel, which you may then easily capture." It is so with Satan. Man knoweth not himself so well as Satan knows him. There are back ways and subterranean passages into man's heart which the devil doth well understand; and he who thinketh that he is safe, let him take heed lest he fall. That is not a bad hymn of Dr. Watts, after all, where he tells us that Samson was very strong while he wore his hair, but

"Samson, when his hair was lost,
Met the Philistines to his cost:
Shook his vain limbs with vast surprise,
Made feeble fight, and lost his eyes."

The reason was, because there was a back way into Samson's heart. The Philistines could not overcome him: "Heaps upon heaps, with the jaw-bone of an ass, have I slain a thousand men." Come on, Philistines, he will rend you in pieces as he did the young lion; bind him with green writhes, and he will snap them as tow; weave his locks with a weaver's beam, and he will carry away, loom and all, and go out like a giant refreshed with new wine. But O Delilah, he hath a back way to his heart; thou hast found it out, and now thou canst overthrow him. Tremble, for ye may yet be overcome! Ye are as weak as water if God shall leave you alone.

Now, I think, if we have well surveyed these different points of our moral standing on earth, every child of God will be ready to confess that he is weak. I imagine there may be some of you ready to say, "Sir, I am nothing." Then I shall reply, "Ah! you are a young Christian." There will be others of you who will say, "Sir, I am less than nothing." And I shall say, "Ah! you are an old Christian;" for the older Christians get, the less they become in their own esteem, the more they feel their own weakness, and the more entirely they rely upon the strength of God.

II. Having thus dwelt upon the first point, we shall now come to the second—THE GREAT PROMISE.—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

In the first place, this is a *well-guaranteed promise*. A promise is nothing unless I have good security that it shall be fulfilled. It is in vain for men to promise largely unless their fulfilment shall be as large as their promise, for the largeness of their promise is just the largeness of deception. But here every word of God is true. God has issued no more notes for the bank of heaven than he can cash in an hour if he wills. There is enough bullion in the vaults of Omnipotence to pay off every bill that ever shall be drawn by the faith of man or the promises of God.

Now look at this one—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Beloved, God has a strong reserve with which to pay off this promise; for is he not himself omnipotent, able to do all things? Believer, till thou canst drain dry the ocean of omnipotence, till thou canst break into pieces the towering mountains of almighty strength, thou never needest to fear. Until thine enemy can stop the course of a whirlwind with a reed, till he can twist the hurricane from its path by a word of his puny lip, thou needest not think that the strength of man shall ever be able to overcome the strength which is in thee, namely, the strength of God. Whilst the earth's huge pillars stand, thou hast enough to make thy faith firm. The same God who guides the stars in their courses, who directs the earth in its orbit, who feeds the burning furnace of the sun, and keeps the stars perpetually burning with their fires—the same God has promised to supply thy strength. While he is able to do all these things, think not that he shall be unable to fulfil his own promise. Remember what he did in the days of old, in the former generations. Remember how he spake and it was done; how he commanded, and it stood fast. Do you not see him in the black eternity? When there was nothing but grim darkness, there he stood—the mighty Artificer: upon the anvil there he cast a hot mass of flame, and hammering it with his own ponderous arm, each spark that flew from it made a world; there those sparks are glittering now, the offspring of the anvil of the eternal purposes, and the hammer of his own majestic might. And shall he, that created the world, grow weary? Shall he fail? Shall he break his promises for want of strength? He hangeth the world upon nothing; he fixed the pillars of heaven in silver sockets of light, and thereon he hung the golden lamps, the sun and the moon; and shall he that did all this be unable to support his children? Shall he be unfaithful to his word for want of power in his arm or strength in his will? Remember again, thy God, who has promised to be thy strength, is the God who upholdeth all things by the word of his hand. Who feedeth the ravens? Who supplies the lions? Doth not he do it? And how? He openeth his hand and supplieth the want of every living thing. He has to do nothing more than simply to open his hand. Who is it that restrains the tempest? Doth not he say that he rides upon the wings of the wind, that he maketh the clouds his chariots, and holds the water in the hollow of his hand? Shall he fail thee? When he has put such a promise as this on record, shalt thou for a moment indulge the thought that he has out-promised himself, and gone beyond his power to fulfil? Ah! no. Who was it that cut Rahab in pieces, and wounded the dragon? Who divided the Red Sea, and made the waters thereof stand upright as a heap? Who led the people through the wilderness? Who was it that did cast Pharaoh into the depths of the sea, his chosen captains also, in the depth of the Red Sea? Who rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah? Who chased out the Canaanite with the hornet, and made a way of escape for his people Israel? Who was it that brought them again from their captivity, and did settle them again in their own land? Who is he that hath put down kings, yea, and slew mighty kings, that he might make room for his people wherein they might dwell in a quiet habitation? Hath not the Lord done it: and is his arm shortened that he cannot save: or is his ear heavy that he cannot hear? O thou who art my God and my strength, I can believe that this promise shall be fulfilled, for the boundless reservoir of thy grace can never be exhausted, and the unlimitable storehouse of thy strength can never be emptied or rifled by the enemy. It is, then, a well guaranteed promise.

But now I want you to notice it is a *limited* promise. "What!" says one, "limited! Why it says, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'" Ay, it is limited. I know it is unlimited in our troubles, but still it is limited. First, it says our strength is to be as our *days* are; it does not say our strength is to be as our *desires* are. Oh! how often have we thought, "How I wish I were as strong as so and so"—one who had a great deal of faith. Ah! but then you would have rather more faith than you wanted; and what would be the good of that? It would be like the manna the children of Israel had—if they did not eat it in the day it bred worms and stank. "Still," says one, "if I had faith like so-and-so, I think I should do wonders." Yes, but you would get the glory of them. That is why God does not let you have the faith, because he does not want you to do *wonders*. That is reserved for God, not for you,—“He only doeth wondrous things.” Once more, it does not say, our strength shall be as our *fears*. God often leaves us to shift alone with our fears,—never with our troubles. Many of

God's people have a manufactory at the back of their houses in which they manufacture troubles; and home-made troubles, like other home-made things, last a very long while, and generally fit very comfortably. Troubles of God's sending are always suitable—the right sort for our backs; but those that we make are of the wrong sort, and they always last us longer than God's. I have known an old lady sit and fret because she believed she should die in a workhouse, and she wanted God to give her grace accordingly; but what would have been the good of that, because the Lord meant that she should die in her own quiet bedroom? I have heard of and known men who, being sick, believed they were dying, and wanted grace to die complacently; but God would not give it because he intended them to live, and why should he give them dying grace till they came to die? And we have known others who said they wanted grace to endure many troubles which they expected to come upon them. They were going to fail in a fortnight or so, but they did not fail, and it was no wonder they had not grace given to carry them through it, because they did not require it. The promise is "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "When your vessel gets empty then will I fill it; I will not give you any extra, over and above. When you are weak then I will make you strong; but I will not give you any extra strength to lay by: strength enough to bear your sufferings, and to do your duty; but no strength to play at matches with your brethren and sisters in order to get the glory to yourselves." Oh! if we had strength according to our wishes we should soon all of us be like Jeshurun,—wax fat, and begin to kick against the Most High. Then again, there is another limit. It says, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." It does not say, "as thy weeks," or "months," but "as thy days." You are not going to have Monday's grace given you on a Sunday, nor Tuesday's grace on a Monday. You shall have Monday's grace given you on Monday morning as soon as you rise and want it; you shall not have it given you on Saturday night; you shall have it "day by day"—no more than you want, no less than you want. I do not believe God's people are to be trusted with a week's grace all at once. They are like many of our London workman: they get their wages on Saturday night, and then the rascals go and have Saint Monday and Saint Tuesday, and never do a stroke of work till Wednesday, when they go to the pawnbrokers with their tools to help them over till the next Saturday night. Now, I think God's children would do the same. If they had grace given them on Saturday to last them all through the week, I question whether the devil would not get a good deal of it,—whether they would not be pawning some of their old evidences before the week was out, in order to live upon them: spending all their grace on Monday and Tuesday, spending very much of their strength in indulging in pride and boasting, instead of walking humbly with their God. No; "as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Now, having said that the promise is limited, perhaps I am bound to add—what an *extensive* promise this is! "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Some days are very little things; in our pocket book we have very little to put down, for there was nothing done of any importance. But some days are very big days. Ah! I have known a big day—a day of great duties, when great things had to be done for God—too great, it seemed, for one man to do; and when, great duty was but half done there came great trouble, such as my poor heart had never felt before.

Oh! what a great day it was! there was a night of lamentation in this place, and the cry of weeping, and of mourning, and of death. Ah! but blessed be God's name, though the day was big with tempest, and though it swelled with horror, yet as that day was, so was God's strength. Look at poor Job. What a great day he had once! "Master," says one, "The oxen were ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away." In comes another, and he says, "The fire of God hath fallen on the sheep." "Oh," says another, "the Chaldeans have fallen upon the camels and taken them away, and I, only I, am left to tell thee." Still, you see, grace kept growing with the day. Still strength grew as the trouble grew. At last comes the back stroke: "A great wind came from the wilderness, and smote the house where thy sons and daughters were feasting, and they are dead, and I, only I, am left to tell thee." Grace still kept growing, and at last the grace did overflow the trouble, and the poor old patriarch cried, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Ah! Job, that was a big day indeed, and it was big grace that went with that big day. Satan sometimes blows up our days with his black breath till they grow to such a cursed height that we know not how great the days must

be. Our head whirls at the thought of passing through such a sea of trouble in so short a space of time. But oh! how sweet it is to think that the bed of grace is never shorter than a man can stretch himself upon it; nor is the covering of Almighty love ever shorter than that it may cover us. We never need be afraid. If our troubles should become high as mountains. God's grace would become like Noah's flood: it would go twenty cubits higher till the mountains were covered. If God should send to you and to me a day such as there was none like it, neither should be any more, he would send us strength such as there was none like it, neither should there be any more. Do you see Martin Luther riding into Worms? There is a solitary monk going before a great council: he knows they will burn him; did not they burn John Huss, and Jerome of Prague? Both those men had a safe conduct, and it was violated, and they were put to death by Papists, who said that no faith was to be kept with heretics. Luther placed very little reliance on his safe conduct; and you would have expected as he rode into Worms, that he would have a dejected countenance. Not so. No sooner does he catch sight of Worms, than some one advises him not to go into the city. Said he, "If there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would enter." And he does ride in. He goes to the inn, and eats his bread and drinks his beer, as complacently as if he were at his own fire-side; and then he goes quietly to bed. When summoned before the council, and asked to retract his opinion, he does not want time to consider, or debate about it; but he says, "These things that I have written are the truth of God, and by them will I stand till I die; so help me God!" The whole assembly trembles, but there is not a flush upon the cheek of the brave monk, nor do his knees knock together. He is in the midst of armed men, and those that seek his blood. There sit fierce cardinals and bloodthirsty bishops, and the Pope's legate; like spiders longing to suck his blood. He cares for none of them; he walks away, and is confident that "God is his refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." "Ah! but," you say, "I could not do that." Yes you could, if God called you to it. Any child of God can do what any other child of God has done, if God gives him the strength. You could not do what you are doing even now, without God's strength; and you could do ten thousand times more, if he should be pleased to fill you with his might. What an expansive promise this is!

Once more, what a *varying* promise it is! I do not mean that the promise varies, but adapts itself to all our changes. "*As thy days, so shall thy strength be.*" Here is a fine sunshiny morning; all the world is laughing; everything looks glad; the birds are singing, the trees seem to be all alive with music. "*My strength shall be as my day is,*" says the pilgrim. Ah! pilgrim, there is a little black cloud gathering. Soon it increases; the flash of lightning wounds the heaven, and it begins to bleed in showers. Pilgrim, "*As thy days, so shall thy strength be.*" The birds have done singing, and the world has done laughing; but "*as thy days, so shall thy strength be.*" Now the dark night comes on, and another day approaches—a day of tempest, and whirlwind, and storm. Dost thou tremble, pilgrim?—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "But there are robbers in the wood."—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "But there are lions which shall devour me."—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "But there are rivers: how shall I swim them?" Here is a boat to carry thee over: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "But there are fires: how shall I pass through them?" Here is the garment that will protect thee: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "But there are arrows that fly by day." Here is thy shield: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "But there is the pestilence that walketh in darkness." "Here is thy antidote: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Wherever you may be, and whatever trouble awaits you, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Children of God, cannot you say that this has been true hitherto? I can. It might seem egotistical if I were to talk of the evidence I have received of this during the past week, but nevertheless I cannot help recording my praise to God. I left this pulpit last Sunday as sick as any man ever left the pulpit, and I left this country too as ill as I could be; but no sooner had I set my foot upon the other shore, where I was to preach the gospel, than my wonted strength entirely returned to me. I had no sooner buckled on the harness to go forth and fight my Master's battle, than every ache and pain was gone, and all my sickness fled; and as my day was, so certainly was my strength. I believe if I were lying upon a dying couch, if God called me to preach in America, and I had but faith to be carried down to the boat, I should have strength given me, though I seemed to be dying, to minister as

the Lord had appointed me. And so would each of you, wherever you might be, find that as your day was, so your strength should be.

And, in conclusion, what a *long* promise this is! You may live till you are never so old, but this promise will outlive you. When thou comest into the depths of the river Jordan, "as thy days, so shall thy strength be;" thou shalt have confidence to face the last grim tyrant, and grace to smile even in the jaws of the grave. And when thou shalt rise again in the terrible morning of the resurrection, "as thy days, so shall thy strength be;" though the earth be reeling with dismay thou shalt know no fear; though the heavens are tottering with confusion thou shalt know no trouble. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." And when thou shalt see God face to face, though thy weakness were enough to make thee die, thou shalt have strength to bear the beatific vision; thou shalt see him face to face, and thou shalt live; thou shalt lie in the bosom of thy God; immortalized and made full of strength, thou shalt be able to bear even the brightness of the Most High.

III. What INFERENCE shall I draw except this? Children of the living God, be rid of your doubts, be rid of your trouble and your fear. Young Christians, do not be afraid to set forward on the heavenly race. You bashful Christians, that, like Nicodemus, are ashamed to come out and make an open profession, don't be afraid, "As your day is, so shall your strength be." Why need you fear? You are afraid of disgracing your profession, you shall not; your day shall never be more troublesome, or more full of temptation, than your strength shall be full of deliverance.

And as for you that have not God to be yours, I must draw one inference for you. Your strength is decaying. You are growing old, and your old age will not be like your youth. You have strength—strength which you prostitute to the cause of Satan, which you misuse in the service of the devil. When you grow old, as you will do, unless your wickedness shall bring you to an early grave; they that look out of the windows must be darkened, and the grasshopper must be a burden to you; and your strength shall not be as your day. And when you come to die, as die you must, then you shall have no strength to die with; you must die alone; you must hear yon iron gates creak on their hinges, and no guardian angel to comfort you as you go through the dreary vault. And you must stand at God's great bar at the day of resurrection, and no one to strengthen you there. How will your cheek blanch with terror! How will your soul be affrighted with horror when you shall hear it said, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." You have no such promise as this to cheer you onward, but you have this to drive you to despair: your days shall become heavier, but your strength shall become lighter; your sorrows shall be multiplied, and your joys shall be diminished; your days shall shorten, and your nights shall lengthen; your summers shall become dimmer, and your winters shall become blacker; all your hopes shall die, and your fears shall live. Ye shall reap the harvest of your sins in the dreadful vintage of eternal wrath. May God give us all grace, so that when days and years are past, we all may meet in heaven. There are some people here that I have seen a great many times, and I thought they would have been converted before now. I ask them one question, (there are some of them whom I sincerely respect) and it is this—what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? When death shall get hold upon you? What will you do then? May God help you to answer, and prepare to meet him!

The Pulpit.

No. L.

THE DEEPNESS OF GOD'S THOUGHTS.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 11, 1857,

BY THE REV. T. DALE, A.M.

(Canon Residentiary.)

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, LONDON.

"O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep."—Psaln xcii. 5.

IN a time of national calamity like the present, my brethren, when the hearts of many are failing them for fear, and even the most sanguine and hopeful spirits are looking with deep anxiety to the things which are coming on the earth, there are two subjects suggested by the few brief but emphatic words of the text, which ought now especially to be considered in their connection, however at ordinary times they may be profitably contemplated apart. One is the greatness of God in his works, the other the deepness of God in his thoughts. We behold the former of these in the natural creation; we discern the other in the moral government and providential administration of the universe. As for the former, in what direction can we look, without reading the greatness of God in his works? We see it in every page of the vast and wondrous book of nature; we see it in the sun which lightens all creation into beauty, and quickens all earth into verdure and vegetation—in the moon that walks in brightness, and the stars that overspread the sky—in the great wide sea, with the innumerable myriads of living things that people it—in the stately mountains capped with snow, and the smiling valleys that stand thick with corn, and last in date, but first in excellence, in the wonderful and fearful mechanism of man. But as to the latter, as to the deepness of God's thoughts, his secrecy in council, as well as his wondrousness in working, we trace it not only through the records of the departed, but in events continually in the course of development around us, which distance and baffle all calculation—in contradictions which we cannot reconcile, as well as in mysteries which we cannot explore. We trace the deepness of God's thoughts in the humiliation of the lofty, in the exaltation of the lowly, and also in the prosperity of the wicked, in the adversity of the righteous, in the slaughter of the

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innocent. We trace it in the establishment of thrones and in the subversion of empires, in the turning a fruitful land into a wilderness, the making a desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose; and we trace it also in the review of our own past experience. Every one that believeth has here the witness in himself how deep are the thoughts of God. He has it in the perils which he has escaped, in the deliverances which he has experienced, in the blessings which he has enjoyed, in the mercies which he has received, in the strange and inscrutable process of that inward discipline which, running parallel with life, has brought good out of evil, and caused evil to be overcome of good, yea, which has made all things, however in appearance adverse and disastrous, to "work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose."

Why, however, it may be asked—why are we now especially to consider the greatness of God's works, in connection with the deepness of God's thoughts? For this reason: because the works of God, so far as they come within the scope of human cognizance, are objects of sense, while the thoughts of God, whether as partially developed in his word, or disclosed at intervals throughout the course of his providential government, are of necessity the objects of faith. We are enjoined to walk indeed not by sight, but by faith; but then sight may come in aid of faith. "Consider," said the Lord himself, "the lilies of the field how they grow," and learn from these a lesson of trust in the all-disposing providence of God. And as God is essentially the same in his works and in his thoughts, for with him is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning," we may warrantably argue from what we do see to what we do not see, and assume that the very same attributes of God's nature, the very same principles of God's action, which are clearly manifested in the one case, are equally operative, if not equally conspicuous in the other. If, therefore, when we "consider the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which he hath ordained"—if, when we consider all that is above us in the air, and all that is around us in the earth, and all that is beneath us in the ocean, and all that is within us in the heart—if when we consider this we are constrained to exclaim, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom thou hast made them all," so must we have conceived the same goodness and the same wisdom to have combined and to have wrought, however mysteriously, in that scheme and dispensation of events which yet, as we look around, seems to present but a mighty maze, and all without a plan. Hence the practical conclusion will be—and it brings unspeakable consolation to many suffering Christian hearts and homes—I say the practical conclusion will be, that we shall combine the lowliest and most implicit adoration of God's mysterious providence in the administration of the world with the liveliest impression of his mercy manifested to every individual believer, and that while in special cases we are constrained to acknowledge that his judgments are unsearchable and his ways past finding out, we shall not be on that account the less practically, the less personally convinced that "all his ways are mercy and truth to them that keep his covenant and his testimonies." Yes, heaven and earth bear witness to this truth; for easier were it for both to pass away than for one jot or tittle of God's word to fail—than for one name to be

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obliterated which is written in the Lamb's book of life, for one light to be extinguished, one jewel to be lost which God hath ordained from the creation of the world to sparkle in the Redeemer's eternal crown.

It is St. Paul who has taught us the first and most important lesson, that the deepness of God's thoughts is most clearly to be understood, and the difficulties resulting therefrom to be most effectually met, by considering God's greatness in his works. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world," said the apostle, "are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." So that those are without excuse who, when they thus knew God, glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, for their foolish heart was darkened. Who can doubt, after this, that the deepness of God's thoughts is so far in accordance with the greatness of God's works, that they who cannot charge him with any lack of wisdom and goodness in the one, ought not to dishonour him by even surmising any lack of goodness and of wisdom in the other? If indeed it were not so in nature, if the ordinances of heaven did not abide, unchanging and unchanged, if provision were not still made, as of old, for the sustenance of the many millions which people this teeming globe, if the earth did not possess within itself a power of reproduction and replenishment which repairs the waste of each succeeding generation, and after the lapse of six thousand years has proved to be unexhausted, and therefore to be inexhaustible, then there might be some shadow of pretext for arraigning, even at the bar of man's short-sighted judgment, a deity whose providence we could not understand, while yet his own creation showed him to be capable of change, or incapable of averting it. But now, whatever difficulties, whatever mysteries, whatever apparent contradictions even, may exist in the working out of God's secret and inscrutable designs, it only needs to be considered, that as in nature, so in providence, he sees the whole, while man discerns only a part, so that we might more rationally think to weigh the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, to sound the central depths of the ocean, and project a measuring line to the remotest of the planets, as by searching to find out God, to find out the Almighty to perfection, to apprehend by finite reason the mind that fills eternity, to note the measureless grasp of the hand that spans infinity. Consequently, to deny the wisdom and the goodness of God, just because no effort of our pany intellect can reconcile certain events in the order of providence with our conceptions of either of these attributes, why, this were a lie against the very ordinances of nature, against those whose "sound has gone out into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world." To doubt God's goodness in his providence, would be a lie against the glory of the sun, and the glory of the moon, and the glory of the stars—a lie against the revolutions of the seasons and the alternations of day and night—a lie against the sunbeams that gladden, and the showers that refresh, and the dews that fertilize the earth. If we can prove that any of God's works in nature were not made in wisdom and in goodness, that they are susceptible to change or liable to decay, in default or in despite of him who made them, then, and not till then, whatever be the unfathomable depths of the provi-

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dential dispensations of the Most High, then, and only then, can we conceive the possibility of a negative answer to the question—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

When, therefore, even in the development of mysterious events, like those which are witnessed at this time in the fair regions of the East, and the tidings of which, like the roll of the prophet, are "written within and without," and the writing thereof is "lamentation and mourning and woe"—when men essay, like the Psalmist, to understand this, and like the Psalmist find it too painful for them—let them bear in mind that infidelity, or, to call it by a milder name, weakness of faith, as to God's perfection in his providence, arises not so much from imperfection in human knowledge as from the wrong estimate that is formed of the degree of human ignorance. Man is prone to overrate his own works because they suffice to apprehend God in nature, to discern the glory which the heavens declare, and to explore, though but in part, the handiwork which the firmament displays. But in order to understand equally the dispensation of God in providence man should be able to do two things, each of which is alike beyond his power—to look backward, so as to develop all the causes of events, and to look forward, so as to foresee all the consequences—otherwise he must arrive at one of two conclusions, the first of which would prove him a madman, while the other, if carried out, would make him a believer. He must either deny God's wisdom in his works, which we hold to be impossible, or acknowledge God's wisdom in his thoughts; for if the first of these be impossible, then the second is inevitable. And we can illustrate this by example. When Abraham was once convinced that the strange and startling command was of God, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt-offering on one of the mountains that I shall tell thee of," he never thought of doubting the faithfulness of God's promise, much less the perfection of God's goodness, because he could not explore the mysteries of God's providence. He had never witnessed the return from death to life, as in the case of the widow's son, and the ruler's daughter, and the beloved Lazarus, but he knew—he "counted," said St. Paul—"that God was able to raise" the child of promise "from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure." In like manner the venerable Eli, when forewarned of the ruin of his son and the desolation of his house, returned no other answer to the message, when once he knew it to be Divine, than an expression of perfect submission and acquiescence—"It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good;" and when the prophet Jeremiah, astounded and perplexed by the malignity of his countrymen—a malignity as unrelenting as it was unprovoked, finding its parallel in that base ingratitude which has imbrued the hands of our Indian subjects in the blood of their best benefactors—when, I say, Jeremiah entered into controversy with his Maker, saying—"Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit," the answer of the Lord clearly reveals, whilst it gently reprove, the saint-heartedness and short-sightedness of the prophet: "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee

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then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they have wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" If thou art thus disquieted at the prosperity of the wicked, what wilt thou do when thine enemies shall be those of thine own house, when thine own familiar friend, in whom thou trusted, shall lie in wait for thee, when the men of thine own city shall gather themselves against thee, saying, "Prophecy thou not in the name of the Lord, that thou die not by our hand?" So in our own case: after giving long quietness, whether to a nation or to a man, when God is pleased to make trouble, and when in so doing he hideth his face, so that none can behold him, what can man do? Where can man seek refuge but in that which was the consolation of the Psalmist, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path?" Nay, we who live in the light of the gospel dispensation may take up the language of the Apostle Paul, who struck a note so much higher than the Psalmist as he lived under a brighter dispensation. "I reckon," said he, 'so far from being cast down by suffering, so far from thinking it any proof or evidence that God was disposed to turn away his face'—"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." "Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look," and because we look, "not to the things which are seen, but to the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

But, my brethren, there is another view at once of the greatness of God in his works, and the deepness of God in his thoughts, which is that which might be presented to us in the contemplation of ourselves. As there is a natural, so there is a spiritual creation, and in each the agent is the same Omnipotent being, and his work is great in each; for, says St. Paul, "God, who caused the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Every converted sinner, every genuine penitent, every lively believer, is a great and wonderful work of God. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature," a new creation; "old things have passed away, and all things have become new." The awakened sinner hath been "turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God;" and this is a moral change as contrary to the law of nature, as superior to the power of man, as the blanching of the Ethiopian's skin, as the effacing of the leopard's spots. The great work of God in the conversion of the sinner is the quickening of a dead soul, a soul "dead in trespasses and sins," the turning of him to good who was "accustomed only to do evil." It is the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, the lame walking, the leper cleansed, the dead alive. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." It is of such persons, each of whom is a wonder unto many, but most of all a wonder to himself—it is of such persons that the true holy catholic church throughout the wide world is composed. True believers are "God's husbandry," though they flourish in a desert; they are God's building, though all is shifting and treacherous around; they are "the light of the world,"

seen only the more brightly in it because of the encircling darkness; they are "the salt of the earth," arresting the progress of moral putrefaction so far as their influence may extend; they are, as St. Peter declares, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people," and the ungodly world itself will scarcely look upon the believer who holds forth the word of life in his conduct and conversation, without the involuntary tribute of admiration and approval, "What hath God wrought?"

And yet here even the deepness of God's thoughts must be taken in connection with the greatness of God's works. Why is it, we may ask—ah! none can answer, but we may ask, Why is it that in the same family, in the same church, under the same training, with the same opportunities and with the same advantages, one child may grow up like Timothy, "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," knowing from a child the Holy Scriptures, which "are able to make wise unto salvation," and so reflecting them in his conduct as to be the benefactor of society, the blessing of the parents, the ornament of the home, while another child of the same parents, baptized into the same church, like the prodigal in the parable may have no other thought or care than to indulge in the pleasures of sin, and may realize in its full deformity the most impressive but fearful portraiture of the wise Solomon, "A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him?" How are we to account for this? We all know that among the deepest things of God, the things hardest to be understood and most difficult to be reconciled, has ever been the declaration by the mouth of the prophet Malachi, "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness." Now, why did God love the one, and why did he hate the other? Who can answer the question? This is a deep thought; it is a startling thought, and St. Paul felt it to be so, when he commented upon it in the Epistle to the Romans. "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." And what is his conclusion, at the summing up of his argument, but that which under existing circumstances may well come home with power to our own hearts? "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

As, then, we admire the greatness of God in his works, so must we adore the deepness of God in his thoughts; and if one of the most perplexing questions of all be asked, Why hath God given to one what he hath withholden from another? or if it be asked, why the wonderful works were worse than lost in Chorazin and Bethsaida, which would have sufficed for the repentance and conversion of Tyre and Sidon—why the miracles of mercy which would have averted the catastrophe of Sodom were wrought only to aggravate the guilt and increase the condemnation of Capernaum; I say, if questions like these are asked, and a child might multiply them to any extent, we have no resource but to answer each for himself, minister and hearer, in the words of the Psalmist, "Such knowledge is too excellent for me; it is high, I cannot

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attain unto it; his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known." In all that relates to his own individual salvation, "the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" but it is not so when God "increaseth the nations and destroyeth them, when he enlargeth the nations and straiteneth them again." Then he "discovereth deep things out of darkness;" and deeper things than those discovered may yet remain in the darkness, and yet be developed upon earth. "Lo, these are the parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him! The thunder of his power who can understand?" But what we can do, and what it is our office to do is this. We can instruct the believer, when he takes for his own the language of the Psalmist, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments"—we can, I say, instruct the believer how he may find comfort from considering the greatness of God in his works, even when he feels himself most incapable of fathoming the deepness of God in his thoughts; for whatever the mystery of God's thoughts may be, both as to the instruments and the processes by which his inscrutable purposes shall be accomplished, one thing we know assuredly, for we have it from himself, that his thoughts towards his people are thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give them an expected end. Let, then, the very glancing of the sunbeam by day, the very gleaming of the stars by night, bear witness with our spirits, that "with God is no variableness, neither shadow of turning;" but as "he is faithful who hath promised," so "whatever he hath promised he is able also to perform;" and let them never distrust him because of the deepness of his thoughts, until they have found him wanting in the greatness of his works.

But this is not all. Here, if ever, the words of the Apostle John apply—"He that believeth hath the witness in himself." It is his privilege not only to look, as others, upon the greatness of the work of God without, but upon the greatness of the work of God within. He can look within, at the understanding quickened, at the conscience awakened, at the passions moderated, at the will controlled, at the affections and desires disentangled from things below and elevated to things above. He can look at the consciousness of an invisible presence, the perception of a hidden life, the heart of stone taken away, the heart of flesh formed within him, the body kept under and brought into subjection, self dethroned and Christ exalted; and he can find in this so many proofs, so many pledges, that God hath chosen him for himself, and that, having begun a good work in him, he will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ, and that in whatever direction his path through life may lead, though it be through much tribulation, it shall bring him into the kingdom of God. Only let the anchor of hope be cast boldly and faithfully into the fathomless ocean of Divine love, and never shall it be shaken from its hold by the rage of the foaming billows or the violence of the winds; nay, the vigour of its tenacious grasp shall only be made more steadfast by the sunbeams of adversity; never shall that perfect peace be shaken which is stayed on God alone; or, if it be, the time of its wavering shall be short; as in the remembrance of the patriarch Job, we shall "see the end of the Lord,

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that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy;" and we shall be able in God's own time to appropriate to ourselves, come on us what may, the encouraging language of the prophet, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Only let it be observed, in conclusion, that while the text is thus adapted to impart encouragement to the godly, who look for help in time of trouble to their God, when the help of man is in vain, it should also convey a solemn admonition to those who are still temporising, still hesitating, still halting between two opinions, still vibrating like the pendulum between two extremes, unprepared to loose their hold on mammon, though intending to take hold on Christ. Let the text remind them, that the God who is great in his works, and whose thoughts are very deep, is also firm to his promises, fixed in his purposes, true in his threatenings, and inflexible in his judgments. That we cannot understand him is only the necessary consequence of the fact that we are finite and that he is infinite; while that he both understands and will judge us, who that hath ever looked upon his works can doubt? We know that, when the hour of retribution had arrived, the very "stars in their courses fought against Sisera," though till then he had been a hero and a conqueror; and we know too, by parity of reasoning, that were witnesses wanting to the utter folly, the infatuation worse than idiotcy, because fostered by presumption, of those who live without God in the world, those witnesses will be found in the sun, the moon, and the stars—in every dawn, which admonished them of duty, in every sunset, which ought to have reminded them of the night of the grave. Oh! then, let none go hence to hear a voice of wrath and to discern a token of judgment in every wondrous work of God. None can go forth to-day, a sinner unwarned, unconvicted, unawakened. Oh! how strange it is, that every man will profess himself to be a sinner, and yet there are so many hundreds, so many thousands, who will do nothing in consequence of that confession, to fly from the wrath to come. But surely those who have withstood the terrors of judgment might be drawn by cords of love; and they shall carry with them the words of that exceeding great and precious promise—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE VOICE OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 29, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”—Hebrews xii. 24.

OF all substances blood is the most mysterious, and in some senses the most sacred. Scripture teacheth us,—and after all there is very much philosophy in Scripture,—that “the blood is the life thereof,”—that the life lieth in the blood. Blood, therefore, is the mysterious link between matter and spirit. How it is that the soul should in any degree have an alliance with matter through blood, we cannot understand; but certain it is that this is the mysterious link which unites these apparently dissimilar things together, so that the soul can inhabit the body, and the life can rest in the blood. God has attached awful sacredness to the shedding of blood. Under the Jewish dispensation, even the blood of animals was considered as sacred. Blood might never be eaten by the Jews; it was too sacred a thing to become the food of man. The Jew was scarcely allowed to kill his own food: certainly he must not kill it except he poured out the blood as a sacred offering to Almighty God. Blood was accepted by God as the symbol of the atonement. “Without shedding of blood there is no remission” of sin, because, I take it, blood hath such an affinity with life, that inasmuch as God would accept nought but blood, he signified that there must be a life offered to him, and that his great and glorious Son must surrender his life as a sacrifice for his sheep.

Now, we have in our text “blood” mentioned—two-fold blood. We have the blood of murdered Abel, and the blood of murdered Jesus. We have also two things in the text:—*a comparison between the blood of sprinkling, and the blood of Abel; and then a certain condition mentioned.* Rather, if we read the whole verse in order to get its meaning, we find that the righteous are spoken of as coming to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel; so that the condition which will constitute the second part of our discourse, is coming to that blood of sprinkling for our salvation and glory.

I. Without further preface I shall at once introduce to you the CONTRAST AND COMPARISON IMPLIED IN THE TEXT. “The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” I confess I was very much astonished when looking at Dr. Gill and Albert Barnes, and several of the more eminent commentators, while studying this passage, to find that they attach a meaning to this verse which had never occurred to me before. They say that the meaning of the verse is not that the blood of Christ is superior to the blood of murdered Abel, although that is certainly a truth, but that the sacrifice of the blood of Christ is better, and speaketh better things than the sacrifice which Abel offered. Now, although I do not think this is the meaning of the text, and I have my reasons for believing that the blood here contrasted with that of the Saviour, is the blood of the murdered man Abel, yet on looking to the original there is so much to be said on both sides of the question, that I think it fair in explaining

the passage to give you both the meanings. They are not conflicting interpretations; there is indeed a shade of difference between them, but still they amount to the same idea.

First, then, we may understand here a comparison between the offerings Abel presented, and the offerings Jesus Christ presented, when he gave his blood to be a ransom for the flock.

Let me describe Abel's offering. I have no doubt Adam had from the very first of his expulsion from the garden of Eden offered a sacrifice to God; and we have some dim hint that this sacrifice was of a beast, for we find that the Lord God made Adam and Eve skins of beasts to be their clothing, and it is probable that those skins were procured by the slaughter of victims offered in sacrifice. However, that is but a dim hint: the first absolute record that we have of an oblation sacrifice is the record of the sacrifice offered by Abel. Now, it appears that very early there was a distinction among men. Cain was the representative of the seed of the serpent, and Abel was the representative of the seed of the woman. Abel was God's elect, and Cain was one of those who rejected the Most High. However, both Cain and Abel united together in the outward service of God. They both of them brought on a certain high day a sacrifice. Cain took a different view of the matter of sacrifice from that which presented itself to the mind of Abel. Cain was proud and haughty: he said "I am ready to confess that the mercies which we receive from the soil are the gift of God, but I am not ready to acknowledge that I am a guilty sinner, deserving God's wrath; therefore," said he, "I will bring nothing but the fruit of the ground." "Ah, but," said Abel, "I feel that while I ought to be grateful for temporal mercies, at the same time I have sins to confess, I have iniquities to be pardoned, and I know that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin; therefore," said he, "O Cain, I will not be content to bring an offering of the ground, of the ears of corn, or of first ripe fruits, but I will bring of the firstlings of my flock, and I will shed blood upon the altar, because my faith is, that there is to come a great victim who is actually to make atonement for the sins of men, and by the slaughter of this lamb, I express my solemn faith in him." Not so Cain; he cared nothing for Christ; he was not willing to confess his sin; he had no objection to present a thank-offering, but a sin-offering he would not bring. He did not mind bringing to God that which he thought might be acceptable as a return for favours received, but he would not bring to God an acknowledgment of his guilt, or a confession of his inability to make atonement for it, except by the blood of a substitute. Cain, moreover, when he came to the altar, came entirely without faith. He piled the unhewn stones, as Abel did, he laid his sheaves of corn upon the altar, and there he waited, but it was to him a matter of comparative indifference whether God accepted him or not. He believed there was a God, doubtless, but he had no faith in the promises of that God. God had said that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head—that was the gospel as revealed to our first parents; but Cain had no belief in that gospel—whether it were true or not, he cared not—it was sufficient for him that he acquired enough for his own sustenance from the soil; he had no faith. But holy Abel stood by the side of the altar, and while Cain the infidel perhaps laughed and jeered at his sacrifice, he boldly presented there the bleeding lamb as a testimony to all men, both of that time and all future times, that he believed in the seed of the woman—that he looked for him to come who should destroy the serpent, and restore the ruins of the fall. Do you see holy Abel, standing there, ministering as a priest at God's altar? Do you see the flush of joy which comes over his face, when he sees the heavens opened, and the living fire of God descend upon the victim? Do you note with what a grateful expression of confident faith he lifts to heaven his eye which had been before filled with tears, and cries, "I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast accepted my sacrifice, inasmuch as I presented it through faith in the blood of thy Son, my Saviour, who is to come."

Abel's sacrifice, being the first on record, and being offered in the teeth of opposition, has very much in it which puts it ahead of many other of the sacrifices of the Jews. Abel is to be greatly honoured for his confidence and faith in the coming Messiah. But compare for a moment the sacrifice of Christ with the sacrifice of Abel, and the sacrifice of Abel shrinks into insignificance. What did Abel bring? He brought a sacrifice which showed the necessity of blood-shedding, but Christ brought the blood-shedding itself. Abel taught the world by his sacrifice that he looked for a victim, but Christ brought the actual victim. Abel

brought but the type and the figure, the Lamb which was but a picture of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world; but Christ was that Lamb. He was the substance of the shadow, the reality of the type. Abel's sacrifice had no merit in it apart from the faith in the Messiah with which he presented it; but Christ's sacrifice had merit of itself; it was in itself meritorious. What was the blood of Abel's lamb? It was nothing but the blood of a common lamb that might have been shed anywhere; except that he had faith in Christ the blood of the lamb was but as water, a contemptible thing; but the blood of Christ was a sacrifice indeed, richer far than all the blood of beasts that ever were offered upon the altar of Abel, or the altar of all the Jewish high priests. We may say of all the sacrifices that were ever offered, however costly they might be, and however acceptable to God, though they were rivers of oil and tens of thousands of fat beasts, yet they were less than nothing, and contemptible, in comparison with the one sacrifice which our high priest hath offered once for all, whereby he hath eternally perfected them that are sanctified.

We have thus found it very easy to set forth the difference between the blood of Christ's sprinkling and the blood which Abel sprinkled. But now I take it that there is a deeper meaning than this, despite what some commentators have said. I believe that the allusion here is to the blood of murdered Abel. Cain smote Abel, and doubtless his hands and the altar were stained with the blood of him who had acted as a priest. "Now," says our apostle, "that blood of Abel spoke." We have evidence that it did, for God said to Cain, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground," and the apostle's comment upon that in another place is—"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he being dead yet speaketh," speaketh through his blood, his blood crying unto God from the ground. Now, Christ's blood speaks too. What is the difference between the two voices?—for we are told in the text that it "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Abel's blood spoke in a threefold manner. It spoke in heaven; it spoke to the sons of men; it spoke to the conscience of Cain. The blood of Christ speaks in a like threefold manner, and it speaks better things.

First, the blood of Abel spoke in heaven. Abel was a holy man, and all that Cain could bring against him was, "His own works were evil, and his brother's were righteous." You see the brothers going to the sacrifice together. You mark the black scowl upon the brow of Cain, when Abel's sacrifice is accepted, while his remains untouched by the sacred fire. You note how they begin to talk together—how quietly Abel argues the question, and how ferociously Cain denounces him. You note again how God speaks to Cain, and warns him of the evil which he knew was in his heart; and you see Cain, as he goes from the presence chamber of the Most High, warned and forewarned, but yet with the dreadful thought in his heart that he will imbrue his hands in his brother's blood. He meets his brother; he talks friendly with him; he gives him, as it were, the kiss of Judas; he entices him into the field where he is alone; he takes him unawares; he smites him, and smites him yet again, till there lies the murdered bleeding corpse of his brother. O earth! earth! earth! cover not his blood. This is the first murder thou hast ever seen, the first blood of man that ever stained thy soil. Hark! there is a cry heard in heaven; the angels are astonished; they rise up from their golden seats, and they enquire, "What is that cry?" God looketh upon them, and he saith, "It is the cry of blood; a man hath been slain by his fellow; a brother by him who came from the bowels of the self-same mother has been murdered in cold blood, through malice. One of my saints has been murdered, and here he comes, And Abel entered into heaven, blood-red, the first of God's elect who had entered Paradise, and the first of God's children who had worn the blood-red crown of martyrdom. And then the cry was heard, loud and clear and strong; and thus it spake—"Revenge! revenge! revenge!" And God himself, upstarting from his throne, summoned the culprit to his presence; questioned him, condemned him out of his own mouth, and made him henceforth a fugitive and a vagabond, to wander over the surface of the earth, which was to be sterile henceforth to his plough.

And now, beloved, just contrast with this the blood of Christ. That is Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God; he hangs upon a tree; he is murdered—murdered by his own brethren. "He came unto his own, and his own received

him not, but his own led him out to death." He bleeds; he dies; and then is heard a cry in heaven. The astonished angels again start from their seats, and they say, "What is this? What is this cry that we hear?" And the Mighty Maker answers yet again, "It is the cry of blood; it is the cry of the blood of my only-begotten and well-beloved Son!" And God, uprising from his throne, looks down from heaven and listens to the cry. And what is the cry? It is not revenge; but the voice crieth, "Mercy! mercy! mercy!" Did you not hear it? It said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Herein, the blood of Christ "speaketh better things than that of Abel;" for Abel's blood said, "Revenge!" and made the sword of God start from its scabbard; but Christ's blood cried "Mercy!" and sent the sword back again, and bade it sleep for ever.

"Blood hath a voice to pierce the skies,
'Revenge!' the blood of Abel cries;
But the rich blood of Jesus slain,
Speaks peace as loud from every vein."

You will note too that Abel's blood cried for revenge upon one man only—upon Cain; it required the death of but one man to satisfy for it, namely, the death of the murderer. "Blood for blood!" The murderer must die the death. But what saith Christ's blood in heaven? Does it speak for only one? Ah! no, beloved; "the free gift hath come upon many." Christ's blood cries mercy! mercy! not on one, but upon a multitude whom no man can number—ten thousand times ten thousand.

Again: Abel's blood cried to heaven for revenge, for one transgression of Cain; that for ought that Cain had done, worthless and vile before, the blood of Abel did not demand any revenge: it was for the one sin that blood clamoured at the throne of God, and not for many sins. Not so the voice of the blood of Christ. It is "for many offences unto justification." Oh! could ye hear that cry, that all-prevailing cry, as now it comes up from Calvary's summit—"Father, forgive them!" not one, but many. "Father, forgive them." And not only forgive them this offence, but forgive them all their sins, and blot out all their iniquities. Ah! beloved, we might have thought that the blood of Christ would have demanded vengeance at the hands of God. Surely, if Abel be revenged seven fold, then must Christ be revenged seventy times seven. If the earth would not swallow up the blood of Abel, till it had had its fill, surely we might have thought that the earth never would have covered the corpse of Christ, until God had struck the world with fire and sword, and banished all men to destruction. But, O precious pardon! thou sayest not one word of vengeance! All that this blood cries is peace! pardon! forgiveness! mercy! acceptance! Truly it "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Again: Abel's blood had a second voice. It spoke to the whole world. "He being dead yet speaketh"—not only in heaven, but on earth. God's prophets are a speaking people. They speak by their acts and by their words as long as they live, and when they are buried they speak by their example which they have left behind. Abel speaks by his blood to us. And what does it say? When Abel offered up his victim upon the altar he said to us, "I believe in a sacrifice that is to be offered for the sins of men;" but when Abel's own blood was sprinkled on the altar he seemed to say, "Here is the ratification of my faith; I seal my testimony with my own blood; you have now the evidence of my sincerity, for I was prepared to die for the defence of this truth which I now witness unto you." It was a great thing for Abel thus to ratify his testimony with his blood. We should not have believed the martyrs half so easily if they had not been ready to die for their profession. The Gospel in ancient times would never have spread at such a marvellous rate, if it had not been that all the preachers of the gospel were ready at any time to attest their message with their own blood. But Christ's blood "speaketh better things than that of Abel." Abel's blood ratified his testimony, and Christ's blood has ratified his testimony too; but Christ's testimony is better than that of Abel. For what is the testimony of Christ? The covenant of grace—that everlasting covenant. He came into this world to tell us that God had from the beginning chosen his people—that he had ordained them to eternal life, and that he had made a covenant with his son Jesus Christ that if he would pay the price they should go free—if he would suffer in their stead they should be delivered. And Christ cried—*er* "he bowed his head and gave up the ghost"—

"It is finished." The covenant purpose is finished. That purpose was "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Such was the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ, as his own blood gushed from his heart, to be the die-stamp, and seal, that the covenant was ratified. When I see Abel die I know that his testimony was true; but when I see Christ die I know that the covenant is true.

"This covenant, O believer, stands
Thy rising fears to quell;
'Tis signed and sealed and ratified,
In all things ordered well."

When he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, he did as much as say, "All things are made sure unto the seed by my giving myself a victim." Come, saint, and see the covenant all blood-bestained, and know that it is sure. He is "the faithful and true witness, the prince of the kings of the earth." First of martyrs, my Lord Jesus, thou hadst a better testimony to witness than they all, for thou hast witnessed to the everlasting covenant; thou hast witnessed that thou art the shepherd and bishop of souls; thou hast witnessed to the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of thyself. Again: I say, come, ye people of God, and read over the golden roll. It begins in election—it ends in everlasting life, and all this the blood of Christ crieth in your ears. All this is true; for Christ's blood proves it to be true, and to be sure to all the seed. It "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Now we come to the third voice; for the blood of Abel had a three-fold sound. It spoke in the conscience of Cain. Hardened though he was, and like a very devil in his sin, yet he was not so deaf in his conscience that he could not hear the voice of blood. The first thing that Abel's blood said to Cain was this: *Ah! guilty wretch, to spill thy brother's blood!* As he saw it trickling from the wound and flowing down in streams, he looked at it, and as the sun shone on it, and the red glare came into his eye, it seemed to say, "*Ah! cursed wretch, for the son of thine own mother thou hast slain. Thy wrath was vile enough, when thy countenance fell, but to rise up against thy brother and take away his life, Oh! how vile!*" It seemed to say to him, "*What had he done that thou shouldst take his life? Wherein had he offended thee? Was not his conduct blameless, and his conversation pure? If thou hadst smitten a villain or a thief, men might not have blamed thee; but this blood is pure, clean, perfect blood; how couldest thou kill such a man as this?*" And Cain put his hand across his brow, and felt there was a sense of guilt there that he had never felt before. And then the blood said to him again, "*Why, whither wilt thou go? Thou shalt be a vagabond as long as thou livest.*" A cold chill ran through him, and he said, "*Whosoever findeth me will kill me.*" And though God promised him he should live, no doubt he was always afraid. If he saw a company of men together, he would hide himself in a thicket, or if in his solitary wanderings he saw a man at a distance, he started back, and sought to bury his head, so that none should observe him. In the stillness of the night he started up in his dreams. It was but his wife that slept by his side; but he thought he felt some one's hands gripping his throat, and about to take away his life. Then he would sit up in his bed and look around at the grim shadows, thinking some fiend was haunting him and seeking after him. Then, as he rose to go about his business, he trembled. He trembled to be alone, he trembled to be in company. When he was alone he seemed not to be alone; the ghost of his brother seemed staring him in his face; and when he was in company he dreaded the voice of men, for he seemed to think every one cursed him, and he thought every one knew the crime he had committed, and no doubt they did, and every man shunned him. No man would take his hand, for it was red with blood, and his very child upon his knee was afraid to look up into his father's face, for there was the mark which God had set upon him. His very wife could scarcely speak to him,—for she was afraid that from the lips of him who had been cursed of God some curse might fall on her. The very earth cursed him. He no sooner put his foot upon the ground, than where it had been a garden before it suddenly turned into a desert, and the fair rich soil became hardened into an arid rock. Guilt, like a grim chamberlain, with fingers bloody red, did draw the curtain of his bed each night. His crime refused him sleep. It spoke in his heart, and the walls of his memory

reverberated the dying cry of his murdered brother. And no doubt that blood spoke one more thing to Cain. It said, "Cain, although thou mayest now be spared, there is no hope for thee; thou art a man accursed on earth, and accursed for ever; God hath condemned thee here, and he will damn thee hereafter." And so wherever Cain went, he never found hope. Though he searched for it in the mountain top, yet he found it not there. Hope that was left to all men, was denied to him: a hopeless, houseless, helpless vagabond, he wandered up and down the surface of the earth. Oh! Abel's blood had a terrible voice indeed.

But now see the sweet change as ye listen to the blood of Christ. It "speaketh better things than that of Abel." Friend! hast thou ever heard the blood of Christ in thy conscience? I have, and I thank God I ever heard that sweet soft voice.

"Once a sinner near despair;
Sought the mercy seat by prayer."

He prayed: he thought he was praying in vain. The tears gushed from his eyes; his heart was heavy within him; he sought, but he found no mercy. Again, again, and yet again, he besieged the throne of the heavenly grace and knocked at mercy's door. Oh! who can tell the mill-stone that lay upon his beating heart, and the iron that did eat into his soul. He was a prisoner in sore bondage; deep, as he thought, in the bondage of despair was he chained, to perish for ever. That prisoner one day heard a voice, which said to him, "Away, away, to Calvary!" Yet he trembled at the voice, for he said, "Why should I go thither, for there my blackest sin was committed; there I murdered the Saviour by my transgressions? Why should I go to see the murdered corpse of him who became my brother born for adversity?" But mercy beckoned, and she said, "Come, come away, sinner!" And the sinner followed. The chains were on his legs and on his hands, and he could scarcely creep along. Still the black vulture Destruction seemed hovering in the air. But he crept as best he could, till he came to the foot of the hill of Calvary. On the summit he saw a cross; blood was distilling from the hands, and from the feet, and from the side; and mercy touched his ears and said, "Listen!" and he heard that blood speak; and as it spoke the first thing it said was, "Love!" And the second thing it said was, "Mercy!" The third thing it said was, "Pardon." The next thing it said was, "Acceptance." The next thing it said was, "Adoption." The next thing it said was, "Security." And the last thing it whispered was, "Heaven." And as the sinner heard that voice, he said within himself, "And does that blood speak to me?" And the Spirit said, "To thee—to thee it speaks." And he listened, and oh what music did it seem to his poor troubled heart, for in a moment all his doubts were gone. He had no sense of guilt. He knew that he was vile, but he saw that his vilest was all washed away; he knew that he was guilty, but he saw his guilt all atoned for, through the precious blood that was flowing there. He had been full of dread before: he dreaded life, he dreaded death; but now he had no dread at all; a joyous confidence took possession of his heart. He looked to Christ, and he said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" he clasped the Saviour in his arms, and he began to sing:—"Oh! confident am I; for this blest blood was shed for me." And then Despair fled and Destruction was driven clean away; and instead thereof came the bright white-winged angel of Assurance, and she dwelt in his bosom, saying evermore to him, "Thou art accepted in the Beloved: thou art chosen of God and precious: thou art his child now, and thou shalt be his favourite throughout eternity." "The blood of Christ speaketh better things than that of Abel."

And now I must have you notice that the blood of Christ bears a comparison with the blood of Abel in one or two respects, but it excelleth in them all.

The blood of Abel cried "Justice!" It was but right that the blood should be revenged. Abel had no private pique against Cain; doubtless could Abel have done so, he would have forgiven his brother; but the blood spoke justly, and only asked its due when it shouted "Vengeance! vengeance! vengeance!" And Christ's blood speaketh justly, when it saith, "Mercy!" Christ has as much right to demand mercy upon sinners, as Abel's blood had to cry vengeance against Cain. When Christ saves a sinner, he does not save him on the sly, or against law or justice, but he saves him justly. Christ has a right to save whom he will save, to have mercy on whom he will have mercy, for he can do it justly, he can be just, and yet be the justifier of the ungodly.

Again, Abel's blood cried effectively. It did not cry in vain. It said, "Revenge!" and revenge it had. And Christ's blood, blessed be his name, never

cries in vain. It saith, "Pardon;" and pardon every believer shall have; it saith, "Acceptance," and every penitent is accepted in the Beloved. If that blood cry for me, I know it cannot cry in vain. That all-prevailing blood of Christ shall never miss its due; it must, it shall be heard. Shall Abel's blood startle heaven, and shall not the blood of Christ reach the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth?

And again, Abel's blood cries continually, there is the mercy-seat, and there is the cross, and the blood is dropping on the mercy-seat. I have sinned a sin. Christ says, "Father, forgive him." There is one drop. I sin again: Christ intercedes again. There is another drop. In fact, it is the drop that intercedes, Christ need not speak with his mouth; the drops of blood, as they fall upon the mercy-seat, each seemeth to say, "Forgive him! forgive him! forgive him!"

Dear friend, when thou hearest the voice of conscience, stop and try to hear the voice of the blood too. Oh! what a precious thing it is to hear the voice of the blood of Christ. You who do not know what that means, do not know the very essence and joy of life; but you who understand that, can say, "The dropping of the blood is like the music of heaven upon earth." Poor sinner! I would ask thee to come and listen to that voice that distils upon thy ears and thy heart to-day. Thou art full of sin; the Saviour bids thee lift thine eyes to him. See, there, his blood is flowing from his head, his hands, his feet, and every drop that falls, still cries, "Father, O forgive them! Father, O forgive them." And each drop seems to say also as it falls, "It is finished: I have made an end of sin, I have brought in everlasting righteousness." Oh! sweet, sweet language of the dropping of the blood of Christ! It "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

II. Having thus, I trust, sufficiently enlarged upon this subject I shall now close by addressing you with a few earnest words concerning the second point.—THE CONDITION INTO WHICH EVERY CHRISTIAN IS BROUGHT. He is said to be "come to the blood of sprinkling." I shall make this a very brief matter, but a very solemn and pointed one. My hearers, have you come to the blood of Christ? I do not ask you whether you have come to a knowledge of doctrine, or of an observance of ceremonies, or of a certain form of experience; but I ask you if you have come to the blood of Christ. If you have, I know how you come. You must come to the blood of Christ with no merits of your own. Guilty, lost, and helpless, you must come to that blood, and to that blood alone, for your hopes; you come to the cross of Christ and to that blood too, I know, with a trembling and an aching heart. Some of you remember how you first came, cast down and full of despair; but that blood recovered you. And this one thing I know: if you have come to that blood once, you will come to it every day. Your life will be just this—"Looking unto Jesus." And your whole conduct will be epitomized in this—"To whom coming as unto a living stone." Not to whom I have come, but to whom I am always coming. If thou hast ever come to the blood of Christ thou wilt feel thy need of coming to it every day. He that does not desire to wash in that fountain every day, has never washed in it at all. I feel it every day to be my joy and my privilege that there is still a fountain opened. I trust I came to Christ years ago; but ah! I could not trust to that, unless I could come again to-day. Past experiences are doubtful things to a Christian; it is present coming to Christ that must give us joy and comfort. Did you not, some of you, sing twenty years ago that hymn,

"My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."

Why, beloved you can sing it as well to-day as you did then? I was reading the other day some book, in which the author states, that we are not to come to Christ as sinners as long as we live; he says we are to grow into saints. Ah! he did not know much, I am sure; for saints are sinners still, and they have always to come to Christ as sinners. If ever I go to the throne of God as a saint, I get repulsed; but when I go just as a poor humble seeking sinner, relying upon nothing but thy blood, O Jesus, I never can get a repulse, I am sure. To whom coming as unto "blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Let this be our experience every day.

But there are some here who confess that they never did come. I cannot exhort you, then, to come every day, but I exhort you to come now for the first time. But

THE VOICE OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

you say, "May I come?" Yes, if thou art wishing to come thou mayest come; if thou feelest that thou hast need to come thou mayest come.

"All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him."

And even

"This he gives you,
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

But you say, "I must bring some merits." Hark to the blood that speaks! It says, "Sinner, I am full of merit: why bring thy merits here?" "Ah! but," thou sayest "I have too much sin." Hark to the blood: as it falls, it cries, "Of many offences unto justification of life." "Ah! but," thou sayest, "I know I am too guilty." Hark to the blood! "Though your sins be as scarlet I will make them as wool; though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." "Nay," says one, "but I have such a poor desire, I have such a little faith." Hark to the blood! "The bruised reed I will not break, and smoking flax I will not quench." "Nay, but," thou sayest, "I know he will cast me out, if I do come." Hark to the blood! "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "Nay, but," sayest thou, "I know I have so many sins that I cannot be forgiven." Now, hear the blood once more, and I have done, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin." That is the blood's testimony, and its testimony to thee. "There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood;" and behold the blood's witness is—"The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin." Come, poor sinner, cast thyself simply on that truth. Away with your good works and all your trustings! Lie simply flat on that sweet word of Christ. Trust his blood; and if thou canst put thy trust alone in Jesus, in his sprinkled blood, it shall speak in thy conscience better things than that of Abel.

I am afraid there are many that do not know what we mean by believing. Good Dr. Chalmers once visiting a poor old woman, told her to believe in Christ, and she said, "But that is just the thing I do not know what you mean by." So Dr. Chalmers said, "*Trust* Christ." Now, that is just the meaning of believing. Trust him with your soul; trust him with your sins; trust him with the future; trust him with the past; trust him with everything. Say,

"A guilty, weak, and worthless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall;
Be thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

May the Lord now give you his blessing; for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

THE FRIENDS OF CHRIST IN THE NEW-TESTAMENT.

No. I.

THE WISE MEN FROM THE EAST.

A Sermon

PREACHED

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"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."—Matthew ii. 1, 2.

OVER those mountains and wastes divided by the Tigris and Euphrates, a caravan shaped its way toward Jerusalem.

Departing from Persia (according to the most approved opinion), we see it winding its way over and around the steep, rough places of Kurdistan, penetrating the fertile Assyrian plain, toiling through the parched places of Mesopotamia, and the deserts of Syria. It was a wearisome journey. Ezra, with a large company, and therefore travelling at a slow rate, was four months on his way from Persia to Jerusalem; so that probably not far from three months were occupied by this caravan in a journey of about fifteen hundred miles.

It was a company of Magi. They were the learned class among the people of the East, employed chiefly with the study of religion, medicine, and astronomy, including the superstitious observance and worship of the heavenly bodies, to which were assigned special influences over the destinies of men. The evening sky was to these Magi their book of revelation. Each orb and constellation had a certain character and certain influences ascribed to it; and in advising kings, in going forth with them to battle, and in directing the movements of armies, the Magi noted carefully what constellations and planets were in the ascendant. The nearness of one of the planets to the earth at the birth of a royal personage was used to foretell his character, and that of his reign.

For some time previous to the Saviour's birth, there was a wide-spread expectation among the nations, that a king was soon to be born who would rule the whole world. By means of the captivity of the Jews, their expectation of the Messiah, founded on the prophecies of their sacred books, was, of course, widely known; and these prophecies represented that Judea would be his birthplace; that he would be a benevolent king, bringing abundance of peace to the whole human race, the author of a golden age, unparalleled blessings from heaven attending his reign; so that he became, long before his birth, according to the prediction of one of the Hebrew prophets, "the desire of all nations."

About the time of the Saviour's birth, it pleased God to publish the event in far distant Persia, by a method coinciding with the habits of the people in the East. Toward the west, the astrologers saw an unusual meteor; their books of science and their astronomical calculations had made no provision for such a sign, but, as the new king of the Jews was then expected, they hailed that strange orb as the announcement of his birth. We see the forbearance and kindness of God in thus falling in with the superstitions of these idolaters.

Had this star been one of the regular heavenly bodies, it is plain that no such unusual impression would have been made by it as was made by this new sign in the heavens. The evening star had always been seen in the west without exciting any special attention; the special brightness of a fixed star, for several nights in succession, would not have roused the Magi in so extraordinary a manner.

It is well known that the celebrated mathematician Kepler, regarded the star of the wise men as the result of a conjunction between three heavenly bodies, such as occurred in the year of our Lord 1604, when Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars blended their rays, as he supposed; those planets being, at that time, in the sign of the Fishes, and a heavenly body then shedding forth a

strange and wonderful light in that quarter. Kepler calculated the conjunction of these planets as having taken place, with two of them, in the year of Rome 747, and with the three, in 748; in one of which years it is generally agreed that Christ was born. Some, who wish to reduce the number of miracles in the Bible, and the corresponding tax upon their faith, as low as possible, account in this manner for the star which the wise men saw. But even if the star had an orbit among the regular stars, its sudden appearance makes no great demand upon credulity, for he who "maketh peace in his high places" has, from the beginning, led forth, and has also taken away, heavenly bodies from the eyes of men.

An illustration of this is the celebrated star, first described by Tycho Brahe, which appeared on an evening of November 1572, in the sign of Cassiopæia. It surpassed in size and brilliancy the planet Jupiter, and was visible sometimes at noon, which is never the case with any other planet but Venus. When other heavenly bodies were hidden by clouds, this new and strange orb was frequently seen through them. Its colour was, at different times, white, yellow, red, grey, and leaden blue. In sixteen months from its first appearance it passed away, and has never since that time re-appeared. This may serve to help the faith of some with regard to the appearance of a new and singular heavenly body at the birth of Christ. But there is the strongest reason to believe that the star which appeared to the wise men was not a fixed, nor a regular planetary orb.

God, who ordained it for a special purpose, disposed the minds of the Magi to fulfil that purpose, by creating among them an enthusiasm with regard to the wonderful sign in the west. Night after night, perhaps, they watched the stranger, till at length all doubt that it heralded a royal birth departed. It hung in the west toward Judea, the region where they had been expecting that a great king would soon appear; and their long-cherished interest in that event was greatly quickened by the special appointment, as it were, of a messenger which seemed to beckon them. They could not resist the Divine call. No more would they watch the Pleiades, till they had followed after that new star. Arcturus and his sons might, for a season, measure their zone, the crooked Serpent sweep through his orbit, and the sworded Orion lie along the sky, unheeded, as to any prophetic signs in their spheres. The star of Jacob was then in the ascendant, and filled the thoughts of the wise men; and so, impelled by an invisible hand, a company of them commenced a pilgrimage toward Jerusalem.

Interesting men! We love you as we follow your caravan in its dreary way along the beaten road or pathless wastes. None ever braved the desert for an object so great as that which excites your zeal.

The presence of a deputation of Magi from the East, in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" moved the whole city. No doubt the Magi expected to find Jerusalem excited with joy at the birth of the new king. "We have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him;" to join with you in your joy, and bring you the congratulations of the eastern world.

Herod the Great was now in the thirty-fifth year of his reign. The appearance of a successor independently of him, of course, filled him with consternation; and whatever disturbed him, especially if it were the prospect of being supplanted, would fill Jerusalem with apprehensions of political disturbance, inasmuch as the Magi might prove to be the representatives of some combination in behalf of a new civil power.

So far was Herod from knowing that Christ was born, that he called the Jewish scribes (for he was an Edomite), and inquired of them what place their sacred books named as the Messiah's birthplace. It appears strange, perhaps, that, having ascertained this, he did not take secret measures to find and slay the infant, instead of waiting, as he proposed, for the Magi to return. For though Herod was desperately wicked, all agree that he was a shrewd man, and of no common ability in the management of affairs. His shrewdness and tact are seen in this very transaction. He called the wise men privily, that his interest in the object of their mission might not be generally known. The only inquiry which he made of them was one which indicated no hostile purpose; while, bent as he was on finding and destroying the infant, he was employing the very best means to effect his object.

Had he sent forth messengers at once to find and slay the child, he could hardly hope to succeed, with nothing to point out which of the infants then in Bethlehem was the child sought, and with the risk, also, of giving alarm

to the friends of the child in season to ensure its safety. Honourable men from the East, seeking the child "to worship him," would be far more likely to find him. "Go," said he, "and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also." But this cunning and well-contrived arrangement, hiding a bloody purpose, enabled the wise men to fulfil the object for which God brought them from their far country.

And now the star which had beckoned them to Judea, and which, perhaps, they did not expect to see any more after their entrance into Jerusalem, "came and stood over the place where the young child was." Words cannot express more intense feelings than the original of the passage which follows:—"And when they saw the star, they joyed a great joy very much." The morning star of their hope had become the evening star of their desire accomplished. That lost guide, in confidence of whose truthful promise they had trod the desert, perhaps in conflict with many doubts, lest, after all, some meteor had only shone to bewilder and deceive them—behold, that kind friend, that faithful lighthouse, shines forth again, and, instead of tracking a way for them into far distant regions, it comes and rests very low, no higher, perhaps, than the smoke which curls from our chimneys, over the place where the young child was. They need not go from street to street, and from house to house, nor tax their patience, nor exercise their faith any more. It was as though "Immanuel" were emblazoned on the door, or "King of kings and Lord of lords" were written on the wall.

The question whether this star were an orb of heaven, or a special sign created for this purpose, it would seem, must be removed, when we consider its position over the dwelling where the child was. It is plain that one of the regular heavenly bodies could not point to one dwelling more than to another.

From the three kinds of gifts which they presented, many have supposed that the number of the Magi was three. The Nestorian Church generally taught that it was twelve. Three was the number ascribed to them in the prevailing traditions; names also being given to them, as, among others, Melchior, Gaspar, and Balthazar. They were held to be kings, representing the grand divisions of men—Melchior being put for Shem, Gaspar for Ham, and Balthazar for Japhet. This explains the Ethiopian complexion given to one of them in the pictures of the "Adoration." The passages which are so uniformly regarded as being fulfilled by them, "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." (Isaiah lx. 3.) and "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents, the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. (Ps. lxxi. 10.) have given rise to the belief that they were kings; and accordingly the Feast of Epiphany was, in the middle ages, most commonly called the Feast of the Three Kings. The literature which has been connected with this brief account by Matthew, of the wise men, is hardly exceeded in variety by that of any other part of the New Testament. Cologne, upon the Rhine, the "City of the Three Kings," claims to possess their relics, and has given them a splendid shrine. But it is needless to say that all this lore is probably the fruit of the imagination. If they were only sheiks, or emirs, the word "kings," in the prophetic passages just quoted, would be proper. Whether the Apostle Thomas baptized them, and whether they helped him to evangelise India, and whether they died as martyrs, or what became of them upon their return from Judea, are questions upon which the Bible gives us no information. But the brief, inspired record respecting them is full of interest and instruction.

I. The coming of the wise men to the infant Jesus was an act of adoration.

The word rendered "worshipped," in the passage which speaks of the prostration of the wise men, it is said, does not necessarily imply anything more than an act of respectful salutation, the same word being used in speaking of acts of courtesy between man and man.

But as Peter refused to receive the worship expressed by this same word, from Cornelius, saying "I myself also am a man," and as the angel said to the evangelist John, who fell down before him, with the same worship, "See thou do it not; worship God," we cannot conclude, from the word itself, that adoration was not intended by the wise men. Let us look, then, at the probabilities of the case.

Had the wise men regarded the Messiah merely as an earthly king, it would have been a most contemptuous and daring act to have proclaimed in Herod's dominions, nay, in the metropolis itself, "We have come to worship him." This would not be an act of "wise men." While they called the

Messiah "King of the Jews," they must have regarded him as having a kingdom which did not conflict with that of Herod—of a heavenly nature, warranting, as the birth of an heir to no earthly kingdom would warrant, such a journey, and such respect as theirs.

Here let it be considered, that the wise men may not have known, to its full extent, the intention of an overruling Providence in their coming to the feet of Christ; nor may they have understood their enthusiasm, with regard to this new-born personage, which brought them so far. Their habits and customs as astrologers made this act natural to them, while they may have been, and we believe that they were, like the prophets, under the excitement of inspiration, who did not fully know the vast import of many of their predictions.

We cannot believe—indeed, it is too great a tax on our credulity to ask us to believe—that God appointed this miraculous star to bring those sages from their distant land merely to pay their respects to a remarkable child. There is an air about the narrative which conveys something more to the mind than this. Self-interest did not prompt them. They had no favours to ask or expect of that child; they would be dead or far away when he should be old enough to ascend a throne; but they laden their camels with gifts for him evidently from a disinterested desire to pay some homage to him. What, then, was the nature of that homage?

Let us read this narrative, and learn to read the Bible in the same way—not with the unbeliever's eyes and heart, but with our own eyes, and our own believing hearts. It is one of the pernicious effects of sceptical opinions, that we subject the Bible in our own thoughts, even when we read it for devotional purposes, to the criticisms made by unbelievers; we are injuriously affected by the doubts and cavils of others. These may help us to examine narrowly the evidences of our faith, but let them not have the effect upon us, if we can help it, to make our faith timid. As those who honour the Son even as they honour the Father; as those who need not still to be laying the foundations of their faith in the Saviour; as those who have learned to say to him, My Lord and my God, let us contemplate this coming of the wise men to Christ, and see if there be not every probability of its being intended by the Divine Spirit as an act of adoration.

That young child, then, whom we see in his mother's arms, while Persian wise men fall before him on the humble floor, who is he? whom do we believe him to be? It is he of whom we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It is the great "mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." It is he who afterward stilled the tempest, opened the eyes of the blind, raised the dead. It is he who came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It is he before whom the heavenly hosts were afterward seen prostrate, crying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." That scene between the wise men and the child Jesus is more than a mere act of respect to a remarkable infant. In their imperfect state of knowledge, as was just before observed, these wise men probably did not know the full extent and meaning of their worship. We, to whom Christ is more fully revealed, can see in that prostration of the wise men an act of religious devotion intended by the Divine Spirit, though the wise men may not fully have comprehended the meaning of their own act. Our souls join with those Gentiles to worship that babe who was God manifest in the flesh, having then those attributes of Deity which he will have when he comes in his glory and all his holy angels with him, and before him are gathered all nations.

While many see nothing in the visit of the wise men to Christ but superstition, oriental reverence for royalty, and the zeal of courtly men to find or make occasion for acts of condescending respect, he who sees dwelling in Christ all the fulness of the Godhead bodily will not ask the lexicographer nor the unregenerate commentator whether the passage imports real worship. "When he bringeth in his first begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him." He who believes that by the Son all things were created that are in heaven or in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, has no question what worship the angels, his creatures, paid him when he assumed man's nature.

It may truly be said that a large part of the "comfort of the Scriptures," as the apostle expresses it, to a pious heart, is derived from comparing

spiritual things with spiritual, from the confirmatory influence of the several parts of the Bible in their relation to each other, and from the discovery of probable allusions and intended coincidences, as well as from the more explicit fulfilment of types and prophecies, and truths directly asserted. Over this source of spiritual enjoyment in reading the Bible a sound discretion should, of course, preside.

Believing, then, that the babe at Bethlehem was Immanuel, God with us, we believe that the visit of the wise men was intended by the Divine Spirit to be an act of adoration in honour of the incarnate Word, and also for the comfort and encouragement of all who at that time were waiting for the Messiah. As a choir may sing a piece which some more spiritual and devout hearers will enjoy far more than they, and adopt it as their own offering of praise to God, so this act of the wise men, no doubt, was received and seconded, by many a pious heart in Jerusalem and elsewhere, as a sacrifice to the Saviour. Many a heart that had waited long for the consolation of Israel would see in the coming of the wise men a strong confirmation of their faith and hope. In that Jerusalem which is said to be "troubled" at the arrival of these men from the East, there was a hidden Israel, the Simeons and Annas, who did not share in the consternation of the king and the unbelieving world. God visited this his chosen people in the coming of the wise men, and gave them a glimpse of the way in which the prophetic Psalms and the visions of Isaiah and of the minor prophets would be fulfilled. God will not leave his people comfortless who wait for him. Were nothing else effected by the visit of the wise men, this warranted their mission, that their coming fulfilled the hopes of the devout men and women who were longing and waiting for the promised Saviour.

Nor did the friends and worshippers of Christ at that day alone receive comfort and joy from the act of the wise men. All of every age who love him and espouse his cause, and are praying and waiting for his final triumph in the earth, may see in this adoration by the wise men a prophecy and illustration of the future glory of Christ, when he shall be King of nations as he is now King of saints. "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him." *I's. lxxii. 10, 11.* This act of the wise men we adopt as ours, the future homage of the nations we make our own, and our personal gratitude and thanksgiving take the form of earnest prayer that the Saviour may soon receive the love and adoration of all the earth. The cause of foreign missions rises in majesty and beauty, and affords us ways in which to express, by the consecration of ourselves and our children to Christ, our love and thankfulness, while our full hearts find relief in those assemblies for prayer and praise which have regard to the universal extension of the Redeemer's conquests in the earth.

II. The history of the wise men is an instance of the increase and the rewards of earnest faith.

Though we may need nothing to persuade us of the power of God to fulfil those promises which relate to the conversion of the world, yet when we see the eastern world aroused by a meteor, and turning their eyes to the birth-place of Christ, we are furnished with an illustration of the infinite ease with which God can and will, in the fulness of time, make nation after nation bow to the sceptre of the Redeemer. By some events of Providence, no less interesting in their kind than the appearance of the star to the Persian sages, and falling in with the habits or circumstances of the different nations as that star coincided with the thoughts and pursuits of the Magi, revolutions of popular opinion will occur which will fulfil the prediction, A nation shall be born in a day. Happy will those missionaries, and ministers, and Christians be, who, with long patience, shall be found labouring and praying for those days, and shall have their faith rewarded, when, by the great outpouring of his Spirit, the Lord, whom they seek, shall suddenly come to his temple.

Not merely to the Simeons and Annas of Jerusalem, nor to those who already love and worship him, but to every soul for whom Christ came to be a Saviour, does this act of the wise men speak encouragement. The object of these discourses is, to present the Saviour as an object of faith, and love, and worship; to excite those feelings which sinners should have to their Saviour; and if any are ashamed of Christ, to show them in what ways some of our fellow-men, from every rank and in every condition, have expressed their love and worship; and to make it appear that all things are but loss compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our

Lord. Perhaps Christ, as a sacrifice for sin, is beyond the present measure of your faith. He is the great mystery of godliness, which, because you cannot fathom it, you do not receive; and, as Judge of the living and the dead, perhaps he awakens your fears.

Begin, then, where the wise men began, supposing your knowledge and your belief to be even as limited as theirs; but, adopting their desire and zeal to know something more of Christ, like them, "follow on to know the Lord." Let us trace the progress of their faith.

The star shone at a great distance, but in the direction of Judea; and these wise men arose and followed it. But when they had entered on their way, the star, for a large part of the time, if not entirely, must have disappeared. In the daytime, of course, they could not see it; in stormy and dark nights it was veiled; and thus, through their long and wearisome journey, they must, to a great degree, have walked by faith.

Not supposing that a king could be born out of the metropolis, they bent their way toward Jerusalem, inquiring for Christ. Instead of finding the great city moved with joy at his birth, it would seem as though the city had the first information of it from these Persians. The story of the shepherds, perhaps, had been treated with ridicule, and was forgotten; and the arrival of the Magi, with such an inquiry, only had the effect to trouble the king, and the whole city with him. Nothing daunted by this, nothing chilled in their faith and zeal, they literally followed on to know the Lord, seeking him with all the heart; and, pursuing their way to humble Bethlehem, behold, the star which they saw in the east came and stood over the place where the young child was!

If we were half as zealous to know the truth respecting Christ, and the way of salvation by him, as these heathen were to find him, all our wishes would be crowned with complete success. We are strongly disposed to hope and to believe that they were not moved to perform such a journey, and such an act of love and worship, to die, after all, without a saving knowledge of the Redeemer. Supposing them to have become acquainted with the gospel, they must have reflected with great satisfaction on the pains they took to find the Saviour, the faith they exercised, their perseverance, and, finally, their not being offended at the lowly condition in which they found him, though their imaginations had, no doubt, presented him to their minds in a manner corresponding with the sublime sign which had distinguished his birth. If they took with them to their home the sacred books of the Jews; if devout men had been moved during their brief sojourn in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, to disclose to them such thoughts and feelings concerning Jesus as Zacharias, and Elizabeth, and Simeon, and others like them entertained; if, along their homeward journey, by day and by night, they read, and prayed, and talked concerning the Messiah, and found that they could worship still at the feet of that everywhere present Saviour, in the desert, and in Persia, as well as in Bethlehem; and if, returning to their people with this song in their hearts, and upon their lips, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," they thus became the worshippers of the true God and the Redeemer, what gain must they have felt that their long and dreary journey had brought them! what caravan ever brought back treasures to be compared with those unsearchable riches of Christ, of which they had become possessed! and what must have been their joy as they turned, from worshipping the host of heaven, "to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come!"

No distant, silent star beckons us, like them, to seek Christ. We have a more sure word of prophecy—a Bible, in which prophets and apostles conspire to bring us to the Saviour; his history is finished; we have not only his manger, but his cross, his tomb. Judea, Samaria, Galilee are imprinted with his familiar footsteps; his resurrection and ascension, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the testimony and blood of martyrs, the conversion of souls already without number, all perform that office for us which that solitary star rendered to these wise men. But faith is not in proportion to the amount of evidence. "Prophets teach the Jews in vain; a silent star beckons the Gentiles; they arise and follow." Still, the same promise assures us of success, if we follow after the small portion of light which our unbelieving eyes take in; still he that seeketh findeth, if he seeks, like these wise men, with all the heart.

These wise men will, hereafter, condemn those nations who, on the first news of Christ, and salvation by him, should have received the gospel, but still reject it. The Queen of Sheba, it seems, is summoned as a witness, at the last judgment, against the men of the Saviour's time; for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, while a greater than Solomon was with the unbelieving men of that age. So if we, with all our knowledge of Christ, should fail to believe on him, the sight of that company of wise men from the East, appearing in the last judgment, before the Saviour, to be openly acknowledged by him, as a consequence of their faith and zeal, would powerfully condemn our indolence and unbelief, and leave us without excuse. Could we then return to earth, no pilgrimages, sufferings, zeal, and love would seem too much for so great an object as a personal interest in the work of redemption. Yet this is offered to us every Sabbath, and as often as we open the Scriptures. With the example of the wise men before us, and all that serves to illustrate and enforce the privilege and duty of believing on Christ, with every opportunity to obtain all that others have been obliged to purchase at vast expense, let us be sure that we be not thrust down from such exalted privileges to a deeper hell. It is not enough to commend religion by approving its doctrines and its influence. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

If those wise men are now among the redeemed, having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, what thoughts and feelings they must have, as they recollect the star in its first appearance to them; the difficulties which they overcame in following after it; the joy they felt when it re-appeared, and gave a divine seal of approbation to their effort; their first sight of the infant Jesus; the impressions made upon them when, in this young mysterious potentate as they believed him to be, they found the King of kings and Lord of lords! As they cast their crowns at his feet, they remember the gold, and frankincense, and myrrh which they once brought so far and laid there; they adore the sovereign love which selected them in their idolatrous land, and brought them to worship at those feet, and now rewards their gifts and their zeal, which were themselves the work of divine grace, with heavenly blessings. Among the happy spirits in heaven, these wise men must have no common joy in thinking of the method by which they were brought to the knowledge of Christ, and their salvation was secured. Who, of all the armies of heaven, fall at the feet of Christ with more affecting recollections, or with greater reason for gratitude and praise! Of the innumerable friends of Christ in heaven, who more suitably lead the Gentile Church than those who were the first fruits of his advent, the trophies of victories won by him while yet in his manger at Bethlehem! And yet every one of us who shall be saved will be an instance and illustration of sovereign mercy; and in proportion to the strength of our faith and love shall we be happy in the recollections of earth, in the society of just men made perfect, and be qualified for future employment in the service of God.

We read no more of these wise men but that they returned to their own country. They carried with them, of course, the news of the Saviour, and no doubt were instrumental in advancing the new religion in the East. Were we allowed to indulge our fancy, as the Christian writers of the middle ages have done, and embellish the history of these wise men with imaginary incidents, we might do it, perhaps, after this manner: Persia, we would say, has not yet ceased to feel the benefit, indirectly, of their early homage at the feet of the infant Saviour. We cannot fail to remember, in connection with these Magi, that to their fellow-countrymen, the Nestorians of Persia, we are now sending the means of re-establishing among them a pure Christianity. That people are remarkable from early times for their substantial orthodoxy. Nestorius was excommunicated by the Papal Church for denying that Mary was the mother of God, and refusing to worship her; and it is interesting to notice here that the wise men paid no homage to Mary. A peculiar tone of piety characterises the Nestorian converts, and it may be that they are blessed, and that great blessings are yet in reserve for them, in consequence of the zealous efforts of the Magi to find Christ. For God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and he remembers mercy to a thousand generations.

We have named the wise men from the East, "Friends of Christ," and have given them a prominent place among the honourable number whom we are to consider in these discourses under that name. It is encouraging to notice

how little of true faith in Christ, and what imperfect knowledge of him, they probably had when they came to his feet. And yet what consequences have flowed to them in their usefulness, during their lives, in directing the attention of others to Christ, in comforting the mourning people of God, in giving an example of zeal and faith to those who have more knowledge of Christ than they. This teaches us that with whatever motive we seek Christ, or however imperfect and deficient our knowledge of him, we cannot seek in vain, nor will our sincere efforts to know him better fail to be rewarded. "A bruised reed he will not break; and smoking flax he will not quench."

It deserves a passing notice, in conclusion, that

III. *The adoration of the Magi affords a remarkable illustration of our Saviour's humility and meekness.*

We cannot suppose that the knowledge of this adoration was withheld from him when he came to years of understanding. What effect might we suppose it would have had on any one of us, had he been told that, when he was an infant, learned men came in a company and did him reverence; that wise men from the continent of Europe made a pilgrimage to his feet! But the Saviour was subject to his parents, and worked at his trade as a carpenter. When he began his public ministry, and selected his first apostles, did he choose Magi for his ministers! No; but Andrew, and Peter, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and the sons of Zebedee. With what truthfulness and beauty, then, does that gracious invitation to each of us proceed from his lips: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." There is only one instance in the New Testament in which the Man of Sorrows is said to have rejoiced; and this was in connection with the truth that God had hid the things of his kingdom from the "wise and prudent," and had "revealed them unto babes." It gratified the benevolence of Christ to think that the humble, unlettered poor of our race were specially the objects of divine compassion, while those who were wise in their own conceit, in consequence of their human learning or gifts, were passed by. When the Saviour, who had had the wise men of the East at his feet, stretches forth his hand, and says, Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God, he excites the confidence and joy of every one whom he honours with being his ambassador, and he should draw all men unto him.

The title, "Friends of Christ," naturally leads to the inquiry, Am I a friend of Christ! Perhaps every one will readily answer, Yes. Mention some proof of it. Take time, and see if you are a friend of Christ by any such proof as commonly evinces friendship. How much do you pray to Christ! what communion have you with him! how often do you repeat with yourself his precious name! on whom of his disciples have you ever bestowed a gift, a kind word or look, for the reason, and for that reason only, that you believed him to be a friend of Christ! what have you ever done for that cause which is all in this world that Christ holds dear!

It is a truth to which every minister of Christ testifies from personal experience, that everything which man can do to influence his fellow-men is easier than to make them love him who is "the chiefest among ten thousand," and "altogether lovely." Amid unsuccessful efforts for this object, saying, Who hath believed our report! and mourning that we can persuade so few to love and honour the Saviour, it is always refreshing and encouraging to look into the New Testament and contemplate the instances of love to Christ as there recorded. It re-assures us of the Saviour's infinite excellence; it shows us how the human heart has responded to his claims upon its love and homage, while the prophecies and promises of the Bible come to our aid, showing that he, whom, having not seen, we love, shall yet be loved and adored on earth and in every land, and by myriads of our race in heaven.

This series of discourses on the Friends of Christ in the New Testament, is begun, therefore, with the view and in the hope of assisting every one, by example, to love and honour the Saviour of the world, to become his friend, and to secure the friendship of him whose loving kindness is better than life. You will find the question constantly recurring, Are you a friend of Christ! The answer to this question will, at the great harvest of the earth, determine whether the reaping angels shall place us with the wheat or with the tares. The Judge himself will assign, as the reason for the sentence which he will pronounce upon us, the evidence which our present lives afforded whether we were, or were not, his friends.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE NEW HEART.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."—Ezekiel xxxvi. 26.

BEHOLD a wonder of divine love. When God maketh his creatures, one creation he regardeth as sufficient, and should they lapse from the condition in which he has created them, he suffers them, as a rule, to endure the penalty of their transgression, and to abide in the place into which they are fallen. But here he makes an exception; man, fallen man, created by his Maker, pure and holy, hath wilfully and wickedly rebelled against the Most High, and lost his first estate, but behold, he is to be the subject of a new creation through the power of God's Holy Spirit. Behold this and wonder! What is man compared with an angel? Is he not little and insignificant? "And the angels, which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." God hath no mercy upon them; he made them pure and holy, and they ought to have remained so, but inasmuch as they wilfully rebelled, he cast them down from their shining seats for ever; and without a single promise of mercy, he hath bound them fast in the fetters of destiny, to abide in eternal torment. But wonder, ye heavens, the God who destroyed the angels stoops from his highest throne in glory, and speaks to his creature man, and thus saith unto him—"Now, thou hast fallen from me even as the angels did; thou hast grossly erred, and gone astray from my ways—not for thy sake do I this, but for mine own name's sake—behold I will undo the mischief which thine own hand hath done: I will take away that heart which has rebelled against me. Having made thee once, thou hast unmade thyself—I will make thee over again. I will put my hand a second time to the work; once more shalt thou revolve upon the potter's wheel, and I will make thee a vessel of honour, fit for my gracious use. I will take away thy stony heart, and give thee a heart of flesh; a new heart will I give thee; a new spirit will I put within thee." Is not this a wonder of divine sovereignty and of infinite grace, that mighty angels should be cast into the fire for ever, and yet God hath made a covenant with man that he will renew and restore him?

And now, my dear friends, I shall attempt this morning, first of all, to show the
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necessity for the great promise contained in my text, that God will give us a new heart and a new spirit; and after that, I shall endeavour to show the nature of the great work which God works in the soul, when he accomplishes this promise; afterwards, a few personal remarks to all my hearers.

I. In the first place, it is my business to endeavour to show THE NECESSITY FOR THIS GREAT PROMISE. Not that it needs any showing to the quickened and enlightened Christian; but this is for the conviction of the ungodly, and for the humbling of our carnal pride. O that this morning the gracious Spirit may teach us our depravity, that we may thereby be driven to seek the fulfilment of this mercy, which is most assuredly and abundantly necessary, if we would be saved. You will notice that in my text God does not promise to us that he will improve our nature, that he will mend our broken hearts. No, the promise is that he will give us new hearts and right spirits. Human nature is too far gone ever to be mended. It is not a house that is a little out of repair, with here and there a slate blown from the roof, and here and there a piece of plaster broken down from the ceiling. No, it is rotten throughout, the very foundations have been sapped; there is not a single timber in it which has not been eaten by the worm, from its uppermost roof to its lowest foundation; there is no soundness in it; it is all rottenness and ready to fall. God doth not attempt to mend; he does not shore up the walls, and re-paint the door; he does not garnish and beautify, but he determines that the old house shall be entirely swept away, and that he will build a new one. It is too far gone, I say, to be mended. If it were only a little out of repair, it might be mended. If only a wheel or two of that great thing called "manhood" were out of repair, then he who made man might put the whole to rights; he might put a new cog where it had been broken off, and another wheel where it had gone to ruin and the machine might work anew. But no, the whole of it is out of repair; there is not one lever which is not broken; not one axle which is not disturbed; not one of the wheels which act upon the others. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot, to the crown of the head, it is all wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. The Lord, therefore, does not attempt the repairing of this thing; but he says, "I will give you a new heart, and a right spirit will I put within you; I will take away the heart of stone, I will not try to soften it, I will let it be as stony as ever it was, but I will take it away, and I will give you a new heart, and it shall be a heart of flesh."

Now I shall endeavour to show that God is justified in this, and that there was an abundant necessity for his resolution so to do. For in the first place, if you consider what human nature has been, and what it is, you will not be very long before you will say of it, "Ah, it is a hopeless case indeed."

Consider, then, for a moment how bad human nature must be if we think how ill it has treated its God. I remember William Huntingdon says in his autobiography, that one of the sharpest sensations of pain that he felt after he had been quickened by divine grace was this, "He felt such pity for God." I do not know that I ever met with the expression elsewhere, but it is a very expressive one; although I might prefer to say sympathy with God and grief that he should be so evil entreated. Ah, my friends, there are many men that are forgotten, that are despised, and that are trampled on by their fellows; but there never was a man who was so despised as the everlasting God has been. Many a man has been slandered and abused, but never was man abused as God has been. Many have been treated cruelly and ungratefully, but never one was treated as our God has been. Let us look back upon our past lives—how ungrateful have we been to him! It was he who gave us being, and the first utterance of our lips should have been in his praise; and so long as we were here, it was our duty to have perpetually sung his glory; but

instead of that, from our birth we spoke that which was false and untrue, and unholy; and since then we have continued to do the same. We have never returned his mercies into his bosom with gratitude and thankfulness; but we have let them lie forgotten without a single hallelujah, from our carelessness concerning the Most High, that he had entirely forgotten us, and that therefore we were trying to forget him. It is so very seldom that we think of him that one would imagine that surely he never gave us occasion to think of him. Addison said,—

“When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view I’m lost
In wonder, love, and praise.”

But I think if we look back with the eye of penitence we shall be lost in wonder shame, and grief, for our cry will be, “What! could I treat so good a friend so ill? Have I had so gracious a benefactor, and have I been so unmindful of him; and so devoted a father, and yet have I never embraced him? Have I never given him the kiss of my affectionate gratitude? Have I never studied to do something whereby I might let him know that I was conscious of his kindness, and that I felt a grateful return in my bosom for his love?”

But worse than this, we have not only been forgetful of him, but we have rebelled against him. We have assailed the Most High. If we knew that anything was God-like we hated it at once; we have despised his people, we have called them canters, and hypocrites, and Methodists. We have despised his day; he set it apart on purpose for our good, and that day we take for our own pleasure and our own labour instead of consecrating it to him. He gave us a book as a love-token, and he desired us to read it, for it was full of love to us; and we have kept it fast closed till the very spiders have spun their cobwebs over the leaves. He opened a house of prayer and bade us go there, and there would he meet with us and speak to us from off the mercy seat; but we have often preferred the theatre to God’s house, and have been found listening to any sound rather than the voice which speaketh from heaven.

Ah, my friends, I say again there never was a man treated by his fellow-creatures, even by the worst of men, so bad as God has been, and yet while men have been ill-treating him, he has still continued to bless them; he has put breath into the nostrils of man, even while he has been cursing him; has given him food to eat even while he has been spending the strength of his body in warfare against the Most High; and on the very Sabbath, when you have been breaking his commandment and spending the day on your own lusts, it is he who has given light to your eyes, breath to your lungs, and strength to your nerves and sinews; blessing you even while you have been cursing him. Oh! it is a mercy that he is God and changeth not, or else we sons of Jacob would long ago have been consumed, and justly too.

You may picture to yourselves, if you like, a poor creature dying in a ditch. I trust that such a thing never happens in this land, but such a thing might happen as a man who had been rich on a sudden becoming poor, and all his friends deserting and leaving him; he begs for bread and no man will help him, until at last, without a rag to cover him, his poor body yields up life in a ditch. This, I think, is the very extreme of human negligence to mankind; but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was treated even worse than this. It would have been a thousand mercies to him if they had permitted him to die unregarded in a ditch; but that would have been too good for human nature. He must know the very worst, and therefore God allowed human nature to take Christ and nail him to the tree. He allowed it to stand and mock his thirst and offer him vinegar, and taunt and jeer

him in the extreme of his agonies; it allowed human nature to make him its jest and scorn, and stand staring with lascivious and cruel eyes upon his stripped and naked body.

Oh! shame on manhood: never could there have been a creature worse than man. The very beasts are better than man, for man has all the worst attributes of the beasts and none of their best. He has the fierceness of the lion without its nobility; he has the stubbornness of an ass without its patience; he has all the devouring gluttony of the wolf, without the wisdom which bids it avoid the trap. He is a carrion vulture but he is never satisfied; he is a very serpent with the poison of asps beneath his tongue, but he spits his venom afar off as well as nigh. Ah, if you think of human nature as it acts towards God, you will say indeed it is too bad to be mended, it must be made anew.

Again, there is another aspect in which we may regard the sinfulness of human nature: that is its *pride*. It is the very worst phase of man—that he is so proud. Beloved, pride is woven into the very warp and woof of our nature, and we shall never get rid of it until we are wrapped in our winding sheet. It is astonishing, that when we are at our prayers—when we try to make use of humble expressions, we are betrayed into pride. It was but the other day, I found myself on my knees making use of such an expression as this: “O Lord, I grieve before thee, that ever I should have been such a sinner as I have been. Oh that I should ever have revolted and rebelled as I have done.” There was pride in that; for who am I? Was there any wonder in it? I ought to have known that I was myself so sinful that there was no wonder that I should have gone astray. The wonder was, that I had not been even worse, and there the credit was due to God, not to myself. So that when we are trying to be humble, we may be foolishly rushing into pride. What a strange thing it is to see a sinful, guilty wretch proud of his morality! and yet that is a thing you may see every day. A man who is an enemy to God, proud of his honesty, and yet he is robbing God; a man proud of his chastity, and yet if he knew his own thoughts, they are full of lasciviousness and uncleanness; a man proud of the praise of his fellows, while he knows himself that he has the blame of his own conscience and the blame of God Almighty. It is a wild, strange thing to think that man should be proud, when he has nothing to be proud of. A living, animated lump of clay—defiled and filthy, a living hell, and yet proud. I, a base-born son of one that robbed his Master's garden of old, and went astray and would not be obedient; of one that sunk his whole estate for the paltry bribe of a single apple! and yet proud of my ancestry! I, who am living on God's daily charity to be proud of my wealth! when I have not a single farthing with which to bless myself, unless God chooses to give it to me. I, that came naked into this world, and must go naked out of it. I, proud of my riches—what a strange thing! I, a wild asses colt, a fool that knoweth nothing, proud of my learning! Oh, what a strange thing, that the fool called man, should call himself a doctor, and make himself a master of all arts, when he is a master of none, and is most a fool when he thinks his wisdom culminates to its highest point. And oh, strangest of all, that man who has a deceitful heart—full of all manner of evil concupiscence, and adultery, idolatry, and lust, should yet talk about being a good-hearted fellow, and should pride himself upon having at least some good points about him, which may deserve the veneration of his fellows, if not, some consideration from the Most High. Ah, human nature, this is, then, thine own condemnation, that thou art insanely proud, while thou hast nothing to be proud of. Write “Ichabod” upon it. The glory has departed for ever from human nature. Let it be put away, and let God give us something new for the old can never be made better. It is helplessly insane, decrepid, and defiled.

Furthermore, it is quite certain that human nature cannot be made better, for many have tried it, but they have always failed. A man, trying to improve human nature, is like trying to change the position of a weathercock, by turning it round to the east when the wind is blowing west; he has but to take his hand off and it will be back again to its place. So have I seen a man trying to restrain nature—he is an angry bad-tempered man, and he is trying to cure himself a bit and he does, but it comes out, and if it does not burn right out, and the sparks do not fly abroad, yet it burns within his bones till they grow white with the heat of malice and there remains within his heart a residuum of the ashes of revenge. I have seen a man trying to make himself religious, and what a monstrosity he makes himself in trying to do it, for his legs are not equal, and

he goes limping along in the service of God; he is a deformed and ungainly creature, and all who look at him can very soon discover the inconsistencies of his profession. Oh! we say, it is vain for such a man to try to appear white, as well might the Ethiopian think he could make his skin appear white by applying cosmetics to it, or as well might the leopard think that his spots might be brushed away as for this man to imagine that he can conceal the baseness of his nature by any attempts at religion.

Ah, I know I tried a long time to improve myself, but I never did make much of it; I found I had a devil within me when I began, and I had ten devils when I left off. Instead of becoming better, I became worse; I had now got the devil of self-righteousness, of self-trust, and self-conceit, and many others had come and taken up their lodging-place. While I was busy sweeping my house, and garnishing it, behold the one that I sought to get rid of, and which had only gone for a little season, returned and brought with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they entered in and dwelt there. Ah, you may try and reform, dear friends, but you will find you cannot do it, and remember even if you could, still it would not be the work which God requires; he will not have reformation, he will have renovation, he will have a new heart, and not a heart changed a little for the better.

But, once again, you will easily perceive we must have a new heart when you consider what are the employments and the enjoyments of the Christian religion. The nature that can feed on the garbage of sin, and devour the carrion of iniquity, is not the nature that ever can sing the praises of God and rejoice in his holy name. The raven yonder has been feeding on the most loathsome food, do you expect that she shall have all the kindliness of the dove and toy with the maiden in her bower. Not unless you could change the raven into a dove; for as long as it is a raven its old propensities will cling to it and it will be incapable of anything above the ravens nature. Ye have seen the vulture gorge to his very full with the very filthiest of flesh, and do you expect to see that vulture sitting on the spray singing God's praises with its hoarse screaming and croaking throat? and do you imagine you will see it feeding like the barn-door fowl on the clean grain, unless its character and disposition be entirely changed? Impossible. Can you imagine that the lion will lie down with the ox, and eat straw like the bullock, so long as it is a lion? No; there must be a change. You may put on it the sheep's clothing but you cannot make it a sheep unless the lion-like nature be taken away. Try and improve the lion as long as ye like—Van Amburgh himself, if he had improved his lions for a thousand years, could not have made them into sheep. And you may try to improve the raven or the vulture as long as you please, but you cannot improve them into a dove—there must be a total change of character, and you ask me, then, whether it can be possible for a man that has sung the lascivious song of the drunkard, and has defiled his body with uncleanness, and has cursed God, to sing the high praises of God in heaven as well as he who has long loved the ways of purity and communion with Christ? I answer, no, never, unless his nature be entirely changed. For if his nature remain what it is, improve it as you may, you can make nothing better of it. So long as his heart is what it is, you can never bring it to be capable of the high delights of the spiritual nature of the child of God. Therefore, beloved, there must assuredly be a new nature put into us.

And yet once again, and I will have concluded upon this point. God hates a depraved nature, and therefore it must be taken away, before we can be accepted in him. God does not hate our sin so much as he does our sinfulness. It is not the overflowing of the spring, it is the well itself. It is not the arrow that doth shoot from the bow of our depravity; it is the arm itself that doth hold the bow of sin, and the motive that wings the arrow against God. The Lord is angry not only against our overt acts, but against the nature which dictates the acts. God is not so short-sighted as merely to look at the surface, he looks at the source and fountain. He saith, "in vain shall it be, though thou shouldst make the fruit good, if the tree remain corrupt. In vain shalt thou attempt to sweeten the waters, so long as the fountain itself is defiled." God is angry with man's heart; he has a hatred against man's depraved nature, and he will have it taken away, he will have it totally cleansed before he will admit that man into any communion with himself—and above all, into the sweet communion of Paradise. There is, therefore, a demand for a new nature, and that we must have, or otherwise we can never see his face with acceptance.

II. And now it shall be my joyful business to endeavour, in the second place, to set before you very briefly THE NATURE OF THIS GREAT CHANGE WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS IN US.

And, I may begin by observing, that it is a *divine* work from first to last. To give a man a new heart and a new spirit is God's work, and the work of God alone. Arminianism falls to the ground when we come to this point. Nothing will do here but that old-fashioned truth men call Calvinism. "*Salvation is of the Lord alone*;" this truth will stand the test of ages and can never be moved, because it is the immutable truth of the living God. And all the way in salvation we have to learn this truth, but especially when we come here to this particular and indispensable part of salvation, the making of a new heart within us. That must be God's work; man may reform himself, but how can man give himself a new heart? I need not enlarge upon the thought, it will strike you in a moment, that the very nature of the change, and the terms in which it is mentioned here, put it beyond all power of man. How can man put into himself a new heart, for the heart being the motive power of all life, must exert itself before anything can be done? But how could the exertions of an old heart bring forth a new heart? Can you imagine for a moment a tree with a rotten heart, by its own vital energy, giving to itself a new young heart? You cannot suppose such a thing. If the heart were originally right, and the defects were only in some branch of the tree, you can conceive that the tree, through the vital power of its sap within its heart, might rectify the wrong. We have heard of some kind of insects that have lost their limbs, and by their vital power have been able to recover them again. But take away the seat of the vital power—the heart; lay the disease there; and what power is there that can, by any possibility, rectify it, unless it be a power from without—in fact, a power from above? Oh, beloved, there never was a man yet, that did so much as the turn of a hair towards making himself a new heart. He must lie passive there—he shall become active afterwards—but in the moment when God puts a new life into the soul, the man is passive: and if there be aught of activity, it is an active resistance against it, until God, by overcoming victorious grace, gets the mastery over man's will.

Once, again; this is a *gracious* change. When God puts a new heart into man, it is not because man deserves a new heart—because there was anything good in his nature, that could have prompted God to give him a new spirit. The Lord simply gives a man a new heart because he wishes to do it; that is his only reason. "But," you say, "suppose a man cries for a new heart?" I answer, no man ever did cry for a new heart until he had got one; for the cry for a new heart proves that there is a new heart there already. But, says one, "Are we not to seek for a right spirit?" Yes, I know it is your duty,—but I equally know it is a duty you will never fulfil. You are commanded to make to yourselves new hearts, but I know you will never attempt to do it, until God first of all moves you thereunto. As soon as you begin to seek a new heart, it is presumptive evidence that the new heart is there already, in its germ, for there would not be this germinating in prayer, unless the seeds were there before it.

"But," says one, "suppose the man has not a new heart, and were earnestly to seek one, would he have it?" You must not make impossible suppositions; so long as the man's heart is depraved and vile, he never will do such a thing. I cannot, therefore, tell you what might happen, if he did what he never will do. I cannot answer your suppositions; if you suppose yourself into a difficulty you must suppose yourself out of it. But the fact is, that no man ever did, or ever will seek a new heart, or a right spirit, until, first of all, the grace of God begins with him. If there be a Christian here, who began with God, let him publish it to the world; let us hear for once that there was a man who was beforehand with his Maker. But I have never met with such a case; all Christian people declare that God was first with them, and they will all sing,

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced me in,
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin."

It is a gracious change, freely given without any merit of the creature, without any desire or good-will coming beforehand. God doeth it of his own pleasure, not according to man's will.

Once more; it is a *victorious* effort of divine grace. When God first begins the work of changing the heart, he finds man totally averse to any such a thing. Man by nature kicks and struggles against God, he will not be saved. I must confess I never would have been saved, if I could have helped it. As long as ever I could, I rebelled and revolted, and struggled against God. When he would have me pray, I would not pray: when he would have me listen to the sound of the ministry, I would not. And when I heard, and the tear rolled down my cheek, I wiped it away and defied him to melt my heart. When my heart was a little touched, I tried to divert it with sinful pleasures. And when that would not do, I tried self-righteousness, and would not then have been saved, until I was hemmed in, and then he gave me the effectual blow of grace, and there was no resisting that irresistible effort of his grace. It conquered my depraved will, and made me bow myself before the sceptre of his grace. And so it is in every case. Man revolts against his Maker and his Saviour; but where God determines to save, save he will. God will have the sinner, if he designs to have him. God never was thwarted yet in any one of his purposes. Man does resist with all his might, but all the might of man, tremendous though it be for sin, is not equal to the majestic might of the Most High, when he rideth forth in the chariot of his salvation. He doth irresistibly save and victoriously conquer man's heart.

And furthermore, this change is *instantaneous*. To sanctify a man is the work of the whole life; but to give a man a new heart is the work of an instant. In one solitary second, swifter than the lightning flash, God can put a new heart into a man, and make him a new creature in Christ Jesus. You may be sitting where you are to-day, an enemy to God, with a wicked heart within, hard as a stone, and dead and cold; but if the Lord wills it, the living spark shall drop into your soul, and in that moment you will begin to tremble—begin to feel; you will confess your sin, and fly to Christ for mercy. Other parts of salvation are done gradually; but regeneration is the instantaneous work of God's sovereign, effectual, and irresistible grace.

III. Now we have in this subject a grand field of hope and encouragement to the very vilest of sinners. My hearers, let me very affectionately address you, pouring out my heart before you for a moment or two. There are some of you here present who are seeking after mercy; for many-a-day you have been in prayer in secret, till your very knees seemed sore with the oftensness of your intercession. Your cry to God has been, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." Let me comfort you by this reflection, that your prayer is already heard. You have a new heart and a right spirit: perhaps you will not be able to perceive the truth of this utterance for months to come, therefore continue in prayer till God shall open your eyes, so that you may see that the prayer is answered; but rest assured it is answered already. If thou hatest sin, that is not human nature; if thou longest to be a friend of God, that is not human nature; if thou desirest to be saved by Christ, it is not human nature, if thou desirest that without any stipulations of thine own, if thou art this day willing that Christ should take thee to be his own, to have and to hold, through life and through death, if thou art willing to live in his service, and if needful to die for his honour, that is not of human nature—that is the work of divine grace. There is something good in thee already; the Lord hath begun a good work in thy heart, and he will carry it, on even unto the end. All these feelings of thine are more than thou ever couldst have attained of thyself. God has helped thee up this divine ladder of grace, and as sure as he has brought thee up so many staves of it, he will carry thee to the very summit, till he grasps thee in the arms of his love in glory everlasting.

There are others of you here, however, who have not proceeded so far, but you are driven to despair. The devil has told you that you cannot be saved; you have been too guilty, too vile. Any other people in the world might find mercy, but not you, for you do not deserve to be saved. Hear me then, dear friend. Have I not tried to make it as plain as the sunbeam all through this service, that God never saves a man for the sake of what he is, and that he does not either begin or carry on the work in us because there is anything good in us. The greatest sinner is just as eligible for divine mercy as the very least of sinners. He who has been a ringleader in crime, I repeat, is just as eligible for God's sovereign grace, as he that has been a very paragon of morality. For God wants nothing of us. It is not as it is with the ploughman; he does not desire to plough all day upon the rocks,

and send his horses upon the sand; he wants a fertile soil to begin with, but God does not. He will begin with the rocky soil, and he will pound that rocky heart of yours until it turns into the rich black mould of penitential grief, and then he will scatter the living seed in that mould, till it brings forth a hundredfold. But he wants nothing of you, to begin with. He can take you, a thief, a drunkard, a harlot, or whoever you may be; he can bring you on your knees, make you cry for mercy, and then make you lead a holy life, and keep you unto the end. "Oh!" says one, "I wish he would do that to me, then." Well, soul, if that be a true wish, *he will*. If thou desirest this day that thou shouldst be saved, there never was an unwilling God where there was a willing sinner. Sinner, if thou wilt to be saved, God willeth not the death of any, but rather that they should come to repentance; and thou art freely invited this morning to turn thine eye to the cross of Christ. Jesus Christ has borne the sins of men, and carried their sorrows; thou art bidden to look there, and trust there, simply and implicitly. Then thou art saved. That very wish, if it be a sincere one, shows that God has just now been begetting thee again to a lively hope. If that sincere wish shall endure, it will be abundant evidence that the Lord hath brought thee to himself, and that thou art and shall be his.

And now reflect every one of you—you that are not converted—that we are all this morning in the hands of God. We deserve to be damned; if God dameth us, there is not a single word that will be heard against his doing it. We cannot save ourselves; we lie entirely in his hands; like a moth that lies under the finger, he can crush us now, if he pleases, or he can let us go and save us. What reflections ought to cross our mind, if we believe that. Why, we ought to cast ourselves on our faces, as soon as we reach our homes, and cry, "Great God, save me, a sinner! Save me! I renounce all merit for I have none; I deserve to be lost; Lord, save me, for Christ's sake;" and as the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, there is not one of you that shall do this who shall find my God shut the gates of mercy against you. Go and try him, sinner; go and try him! Fall upon thy knees in thy chamber this day, and try my Master. See if he will not forgive you. You think too harshly of him. He is a great deal kinder than you think he is. You think he is a hard master, but he is not. I thought he was severe and angry, and when I sought him, "Surely," I said, "if he accepteth all the world beside, he will reject me." But I know he took me to his bosom; and when I thought he would spurn me for ever, he said, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins," and I wondered how it was, and I do wonder now. But it shall be so in your case. Only try him, I beseech thee. The Lord help thee to try him, and to him shall be the glory, and to thee shall be happiness and bliss, for ever and ever.

THE POOR PRISONER.

A Sermon

PREACHED

IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE,

WINCHELSEA, SUSSEX.

BY THE RECTOR, THE REV. J. J. WEST, M.A.

ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 18, 1858.

And to which is prefixed the PRAYER offered up at the time.

“Let the sighing of the prisoner come before THEE; according to the greatness of THY POWER preserve THOU those that are appointed to die.”—
Psalm lxxix. 11.

* * The Sermon and Prayer were both taken down at the time by a stranger,
in the congregation.

LONDON:

JAMES PAUL, 1, CHAPTER HOUSE COURT,

NORTH SIDE ST. PAUL'S, AND PATERNOSTER ROW.

THE PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

O ! GOD of all GRACE, FATHER, SON, AND HOLY GHOST. Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity—THREE PERSONS ! ONE GOD ! Look down upon Thy Church assembled here, and bless us with Thy heavenly grace. Solemnize in our hearts the tremendous fact that we are in Thy especial presence ; that we desire to worship Thee in the Spirit, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, to have no confidence in the flesh. Bless Thy ministering servants, the one preaching, the other listening, and Thy people assembled together in the pews. Command Thy GOSPEL into hearts before Thee that may be as hard as stones, and make the hard and rebellious sinner like a little child before Thee, and build up Thy believing family. Bless the seekers and comfort mourners. Make us finders, and give us joy and peace in believing. And, now LORD ! open Thy hand, touch the lip of the preacher with a coal from Thy own altar that it may be the living TRUTH from the LIVING GOD to living souls, for JESUS CHRIST'S sake. Amen.

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The Sermon.

"Let the sighing of the prisoner come before THEE; according to the greatness of THY power preserve THOU those that are appointed to die."—Psalm lxxix. 11.

THERE is something blessedly experimental in these words, and to every man and woman "born from above," quickened by the Holy Ghost to know anything of the truth as it is in Jesus; and who has had deposited within him by God a desire to seek after Jesus, and to ascertain his own personal interest in the Atonement made for sin—To such as long to have some criterion test in order to discover whether they are saved by blood and love—I cannot imagine any words throughout the whole Book of Psalms more suited to the case of such a man than the one on which I am now endeavouring to preach, for the glory of God, and the edification of your souls and mine.

Now, if we look at the verses of which this Psalm is composed, we find that the Psalmist is in a complaining state; complaining of the desolation of Jerusalem; praying for speedy deliverance, and making a vow of thankfulness when that deliverance should be granted.

I am taking the verse before me in an experimental sense—every word of it so suits the child of God.

First, "The sighing."

Then, "The prisoner"—why he sighs.

Then, the petition—"Let the sighing of the prisoner come before THEE."

And then—"According to the greatness of THY power preserve Thou those that are appointed to die."

Now, in the day in which we live profession is the great snare which Satan is employing to further his own cunning designs; there is all the form, the attending churches—the crowded chapel! and this throughout the land. But, mark me, there is but one body of men, and that body compared to a "*little flock*," that are really worshipping God in spirit and in truth; and these men and women are each and all brought to experience the meaning of the text before me. They are brought into prison, shut up in bondage, and all mere external profession without a feeling sense of this is nothing but professing cant and methodistical delusion! The work of the Holy Ghost when He begins it in a sinner, in an elect man—"Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," will realize this—there must be, there will be an imprisonment, a feeling sense of bondage! I am well aware that this is not a popular style of preaching, neither am I ambitious of being a popular preacher; but I am ambitious to be made a useful preacher to poor and exercised sinners. David was a keeper, a feeder of his father's sheep, and I wish to feed the sheep of Christ, to guard you, and warn you against the monstrous errors, the many dogmas of our day—and I cannot imagine a sweeter test or evidence that you are one of Christ's sheep, than your knowing the fact experimentally, that you are either shut up now in prison and sighing there, or that having been so shut up you have been brought out now into Gospel liberty. "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee; according to the greatness of Thy power preserve Thou those that are appointed to die."

One of my hearers told me lately that my loved and honoured brother, John

Wallinger, gave out this short text the other day at Hastings—"A daughter of Abraham." Now, in the account recorded of that daughter of Abraham in Luke xiii., (and some of you lately heard me read that chapter in the service of the day,) we find that she was "*bowed together*, and could in no wise lift up herself." Here is a striking picture of the church, for we find that this woman was bent double, helpless, and could do nothing. Such was her bodily state! What a real figure of the people of God!—(in a spiritual sense)—we can in no wise lift up ourselves TILL JESUS COMES, and looses us from our infirmity, or as in another Scripture says—"Loose him and let him go." So David prays in Psalm cxlii. 7—"Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for Thou shalt deal bountifully with me." This must be so, we are not to be caught by mere profession, we are not to be deceived by persons who get up their creeds from other people or from books. Christianity is *in the heart*, it is the work of God in the *inner man*, or it will never, and can never stand the test of a dying bed, and a dying hour!!

The point before us, first of all, is the prison, and the prisoner! It is a peculiar prison, and it is the *King's prisoner*. "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before THEE." This is the poor man that has been taken captive by law and justice. As in England, no policeman dares to take any man without some charge is laid against him—a charge of felony, or of burglary—so in a spiritual sense in the case of sinners, there is the heavy charge against us of guilt and sin, a broken law, you and I are guilty, and when the Holy Ghost takes us captive, when there is the conviction of sin in the heart, and God's law brings in its charge, when guilt is felt and truly known there must be a feeling sense of *imprisonment*, and out of this prison there is no escape except by the power of HIM who missioned the angel to liberate Peter from his prison cell. Now, something of this prison must be known, and the sighing of distress in bondage. It is not merely saying, that one is a churchman, and another, that he is a dissenter—but the *test* is, as to whether or not the work of God has been begun in the soul. What do we know about the Spirit of God shutting us up in prison!—and bringing us under *condemnation* there! It is one thing to *talk*, it is another thing to *feel*. It is one thing to profess the Gospel, to have it merely in the head, or on the tip of the tongue, it is another thing to know the Gospel in a broken heart. Here is the test! Now what is the experience of the prisoner in this prison! Distress under the condemnation of guilt and sin! hence "*the sighing of the prisoner*." "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before THEE." In God's ear there is music in a sigh, it was so when the Publican cried—"God be merciful to me a sinner!" In that is reality! It is the sigh of *distress*! It is the sigh of *desire*! There is a sweet petition in the service of the Church well suited to every poor sinner's case—"O God, merciful Father, that despisest not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful; mercifully assist our prayers that we make before Thee in all our troubles and adversities,—whenever they oppress us; and graciously hear us, that those evils, which the craft and subtlety of the devil or man worketh against us, be brought to nought; and by the providence of Thy goodness they may be dispersed; that we Thy servants, being hurt by no persecutions, may evermore give thanks unto Thee in Thy holy church, through Jesus Christ our Lord." How many of my hearers could feelingly repeat that blessed prayer in honest faithfulness just now! I could! Could

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you! "The desire of such as be sorrowful." Hannah was a woman of a "sorrowful spirit," and under the exercise of that spirit of sorrow it is graphically written—"*she poured out her soul to the Lord.*" It is so in the prison cell with every prisoner! I believe that some now ranged before me in these pews know something of imprisonment, and that the sighing and cry from many a broken heart goes up without the tongue uttering a word to that God who hears and answers prayer! "*The sighing of the prisoner!*" the desire of the broken hearted. O! my hearers! experience has made me believe that some of the best prayers, some of the most heaven-penetrating cries are often those heard and accepted by God when the tongue never utters a word. The heart! the broken heart! the contrite heart pours itself out and up to Him, and he who *sees* and *knows* the heart, hears and answers "*the sighing of the prisoner.*" "*Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee.*"

I have endeavoured to show you something of the prison and of the prisoner, and of the work of God on his soul. Now mark the petition—"Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee!" What satisfaction is there in all our worship, in all our offering up of prayer, or in taking the Hymn Book and attempting the work of praise, unless *this* goes before our God! A lip-service may do very well in a Popish Chapel, but it will not do *here*. Our desire must be *this*, and the test of our discipleship must be *this*, that our sighing and our cry goes before the living God. In this is satisfaction! and whether our sighing be answered speedily or not, the hope that it is before God is enough. It shall be answered at the appointed time! The sighing of the prisoner comes before God, and the prison door shall be opened at the right moment. What was the first hymn we sung just now! I found it very sweet, and a reality! It was that Jesus Christ might be revealed *in me*! And nothing will satisfy the prisoner shut up in bondage, but having Christ Jesus manifested and revealed *in the soul*. When I go home to-night, what satisfaction shall I feel after preaching here, unless I have a test in my own soul that I know something of Him, that, as a poor prisoner, I can sigh out all my hard cases and all my sins, and all my cares into His ear, with a hope that I do know that salvation is *all* in Him! Nothing else will ever satisfy an heir of heaven but *this*! I have some before me now who know something of *these things*! My hearers, you may be despised! Never mind that. You may be cast out as evil! Never mind that. Worldly men, and professing men particularly, may be shy of you, but all this is a blessed test, a token for good—"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake." Now, mark well what I say, and whether I speak to old Christians, or to wordlings; whether I speak to those who have long been in a profession of "*the truth as it is in Jesus,*" or to others who know nothing about it—Whether I were here addressing the aristocracy of the country or speaking to the honest round-frocked peasant—to whomsoever I am preaching, I proclaim from this pulpit top as a minister of the everlasting Gospel, and a Clergyman of the Church of England, that the sighing, the cry of distress in prayer tests the fact of a work of God in the inner man. This may be—*it is*, unpopular, and the natural man will not, yea, cannot receive it, but whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, it is the solemn TRUTH of the ETERNAL JEHOVAH!

The candidate who at a county election wishes to be at the head of the poll must be popular, but the minister of the Gospel must be faithful, though "*hated of all for Christ's sake.*" And, mark me, my hearers, say not, that

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(*this refers only to myself and to my brother minister sitting at the communion table. Be not deceived, we are not—Ministers are not to bear all the brunt of the battle—true it is, that as the ensigns in the regiment we carry the colours and may be conspicuous for a mark; but where are the other soldiers in the ranks!—where are the serjeants, the corporals, the privates! My hearers, we must together bear the heat and the trials of the battle, we have to encounter and to contend against a common enemy, the world, the flesh, and the devil! Hence our trials, our temptations, our various crosses; and groaning as we do under a body of sin and death, we look to the same God and the same precious Saviour for PROTECTION! CONFORT! VICTORY! "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before THEE." A prisoner of Jesus Christ. One word again on that! A prisoner for His sake! Shut up because of sin! To be set FREE when God's appointed moment comes. The solemn question now comes—Have you been arraigned! Is there the charge of sin and guilt, actual and personal against you? Is there any indictment against you? Do you plead *guilty*? According to our English law every prisoner when placed in the dock *must* plead "not guilty," he is forced to do so, or the trial cannot proceed—he says, "not guilty." But with the prisoner I am preaching of *it is not so*, through Omnipotent grace guilt is *confessed*, and *felt*, and *known*.*

*"Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows and from sins."*

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." God will finish His work. The Arminians hold a contrary doctrine—but the Gospel declares that when and where God begins a work He will finish it. We are *saved by grace*, not by creature doings! Now, my hearers, in those three petitions that we have to-day offered up in our Litany, we have prayed—"O! God the Father, of heaven, have mercy upon us miserable sinners." "O! God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us miserable sinners." "O! God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us miserable sinners." We have enunciated these words before God! We have confessed ourselves before Him to be guilty sinners—now the man that has really *felt* all this must have realized the fact—"the sighing of the prisoner"—and even those that have experienced liberty may be again and again brought into bondage! shut up and imprisoned—hence David's cry—"Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for Thou shalt deal bountifully with me"—sin, temptations, depravity, iniquity, abominable tempers imprison the church continually. Christ is the liberty of His people—but when He hides His face, when He withdraws His presence, then we are in darkness and know what a prison means. A blessed Christ! a glorious Christ is our liberty! In our service this mornning we have heard Him proclaimed in the second chapter that was read—"I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven"—and in one particular passage that struck me very forcibly—"And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." Mark this, my hearers! "every one which *seeth* the Son, and believeth on Him!" Have you seen Him! then you must know something of Him! you heard the words read in the Service—"Every one which *seeth* the Son,

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and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." Now, the seeker wants to know *this*, longs to realize *this*. 'Do I know anything of him?' 'Has Christ been revealed in me?' Paul, in Hebrews ii. says—"BUT WE SEE JESUS!" And I cannot imagine a sweeter test of discipleship than a seeing of THE SON, and BELIEVING ON HIM—for when a sinner sees Jesus, and believes on Him, he *then* has everlasting life. This is the will of God! Seeing Jesus and believing on Him is the work of grace, and God's grace is sufficient for us, and it is this which compels us to see and believe on the ETERNAL SON OF GOD WHOM Jehovah has set apart, appointed for the salvation of His people, so that those words are true which you heard just now read in the Service—"All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

And now, before I pass on to the other points before us, listen to me!—I know well that what I am preaching will only suit and only be received by the people of God—those I mean who have been taught the *reality* of these things—but mark me! there may be many here now hearing me who are the Elect of God in His "*eternal purpose*"—"blind people that have eyes!"—but who are as yet still "*dead in trespasses and sins*"—to be (mark me!) brought out at JEHOVAH'S appointed time! and it is this which makes me earnest, which gives me encouragement in preaching. We cannot tell *who* the Elect are, for aught I know every one in this church now may be elect!—"who can tell?" hence the command—"Go ye into all the world and PREACH THE GOSPEL to EVERY creature." I say, you may be every one of you Elect in Jehovah's purpose—but, BUT the test of it will be by the SPIRIT'S work on your hearts, and I cannot give you a surer test of "your election of God" *individually*, than having in yourselves an experimental sense of that earnest sighing in solemn solitude before God, set forth in the text—"Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee; according to the greatness of Thy power preserve Thou those that are appointed to die." No mere professor can pray so—it is the sigh of the broken in heart, the cry of the repenting mourner, the prisoner's petition that tests the reality of the work of God the Holy Ghost in and on the soul. This is not mere doctrine! it is practical! experimental! My hearers, the points I am preaching before you are—"the *sighing of the prisoner, and why he sighs*"—then the desire that that sighing may come before God—and then the solemn petition, showing the state of the prisoner—"According to the greatness of Thy power preserve Thou those that are appointed to die"—in *this* we see the condition of the poor prisoner—"APPOINTED TO DIE." Now, first of all as to the word "*appointed*." We know the meaning of being appointed to anything, to this office, or to the other, the appointment of a Lord Chancellor, the appointment of a Bishop—but mark the text—"APPOINTED TO DIE!" My hearers! in discharging the solemn and tremendous office to which I am appointed, and as I am now preaching, and you listening, the desire of my inmost soul is to be allowed of God to touch your hearts—(I say allowed, for it is God alone that can touch any heart)—and whilst I have preached to you of the prison, and the prisoner, and the sighing, and why he cries—and have had, as it were, text sufficient, and subject enough had I stopped at the first colon in the verse—yet such a vast, such a mighty subject bursts out before me in its last clause, that I feel constrained, yea, compelled to go on—"according to the greatness of Thy power preserve Thou *those that are appointed to die!*" Now, "*appointed*"

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to die." I take this as it stands, both in its *letter* meaning and in its *SPIRITUAL* signification also. We are appointed, every one of us, you and I, to die. Some of you may be, and I suspect are, just entering into life, and as you suppose into all its so-called happiness! Its "*coulour de rose*!" Domestic life, and pleasures here, and these painted by the imagination fit (as it were) in the fairest colours before you; but, remember! despite the chequered scenes of life—remember the point I am preaching on before you—"APPOINTED TO DIE!" It was the faithful reply of a Bishop of our Church in Ireland, when asked by a nobleman in that country who had just been building a family mansion, what motto should be used to commemorate the work—"My Lord, put on it, TO BE BURNT." And is it not so! This earth will be burnt up by fire. Now, mark the word! "*appointed to die!*" "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;"—Like the convicted felon, in the condemned cell, in the Old Bailey, the judge has passed on him the fearful sentence of the law, and he therefore in *that* sense is "*appointed to die!*" so you and I condemned by sin have heard the sentence—"and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Man is to die then—man is to be laid in the silent grave—and as death leaves us, so judgment finds us. That touching petition in our Litany strikes me here—"In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good LORD deliver us." Do not say that I make you melancholy, that I frighten you by *preaching thus*.

"Death to a saint is victory won."

I would not paint a dismal picture before you. I tell you the *TRUTH*—you are "*appointed to die*." And, mark me, unless you are all *MADE* to believe in Christ, as your only salvation, you will be damned for ever. Hear God's word—"he that BELIEVETH NOT shall be damned." Now, knowing this appointment, knowing that we shall die, listen to the portion of the text I am preaching on—"according to the greatness of Thy power preserve Them those that are appointed to die." It has been well said—"Dying grace for dying hours;" and in the Bible it is written in promise to the church—"As THY DAYS, THY STRENGTH." And here comes the solemn question—Are we each, you and I, raised from a death in sin! David says—"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints." A remarkable Scripture that! In Ephesians i. 19—21—"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Observe! the same greatness of power, of God's power! which raised up Christ from the dead—(the tremendous event which we specially commemorate at Easter)—that *same power* can alone raise the sinner from a death of sin to newness of life in Christ Jesus! And hence—(knowing this, and believing this)—with all the love of a faithful minister, I ask each one of you—Have you been raised up from the death of sin! Each one of you has been "born in sin," "shapen in iniquity;" but the point is, Has the greatness of God's power been wrought in you! Raising you individually up from death, the fearful death in trespasses and sins!

And now I would refer to the *SPIRITUAL* and *experimental* meaning of
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these words—"according to the greatness of Thy power preserve Thou those that are appointed to die." Every saved man must be brought to this—he must know the prison-house, and the condemned cell in that prison, and be "cast for death" by *law*, *sin*, and *conscience*—be made to sigh and cry under the law's condemning power, to cry for PARDON, for LIBERTY, for LIFE. There is something dreadful in the appearance of the condemned cell—in that gloomy prison of Newgate, and that particular part of it where felons doomed to die are placed. O! what a scene of horror! death seems written on its very walls, and the pale faced convict, the clanking chain, and the everything there—my tongue cannot describe the vivid realities of such a place. But, my hearers, the prison, and the prisoner, that I am preaching about—(as furnished me by the text)—O! there is in the spirituality of it, as keen a reality in this, as in the other. Guilt and sin lay at the bottom of it all! and in *this* prison-house, death seems appointed to the poor soul condemned and bondaged there. And yet it is a sweet test that the sinner shall *not* die eternally—a criterion that we are of the Lord's family when we know and feel the condemnation of guilt and sin, of the *killing* power of God's holy and righteous law! *Ah! says the needy soul if I could only feel that!!* Such is the average experience of the church.

And here my mind recurs to those who used to listen to me in this Church, and whose bodies (some of them) now lie outside the door. My fellow-labourer, now sitting at the Communion Table, and who has read the service for me this morning, forcibly reminds me of his honoured father-in-law, who used to sit by that pillar yonder listening to the Gospel Sunday after Sunday—now, I believe, he rests for ever safe in glory with my honoured Lord! He well knew, when here in life, the things which I am now declaring. How often has he said to me—"Christians are shy and timid"—and under the influence of such a feeling it was his custom to sit by that pillar in this venerable church, worshipping, and listening to the Gospel (as it were) *unseen*. Another too, a godly farmer, who run well, and firmly with me to the end of his course, in heart-union while on earth, and now not in death divided—he knew well the sighing of the prisoner, the cry of distress, and the trials of the narrow pathway—and in these things consists the reality of *heart*, and *Christian union*, and *communion*. Such a union is only felt, and such communion can only be experienced amongst such as have been *fellow prisoners* shut up together in "the place where the king's prisoners are bound"—who have there been made to sigh and to cry from the same heartfelt inward sense of helplessness and need. How different the case with all other persons, those who profess much, and speak great things. I have had all sorts of such here, "*enduring but for a time*." But, my hearers, the being "*appointed to die*" teaches reality. The hypocrite knows not this. It is *this* which makes the soul cry out for preservation, for keeping, for deliverance! Bondage and the prison make men feel the TRUTH, and long for the greatness of the power of Him who alone can help the needy sinner! Hence the cry, and here's the test; 'preserve me,' 'keep me,' 'Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.' And without that preservation, where should we be! Profession is one thing. LIGHT is NOT LIFE. It is written—"And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." "They saw the *light*, and were afraid"—"but they *heard not the voice* of Him that spake" to Paul. Men may and do see the light, and it makes them tremble, as Kent says—

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"Damnation 'tis an awful sound,
But not unjust to them."

But how different the case of such as hear the voice, such as are condemned by sin and law, "*appointed to die*" *experimentally*; such an one will say, "Can I be a child of God? I am so vile, so sinful—it has been said, that it is easier to have faith for *another* than for one'sself. And so it is, unless God give you that saving faith which is His own special and sovereign gift! All is easy *then*! Paul knew the reality of this—"without *fightings*, *within fears*." The pathway of the church is that of trial, temptation, exercise! and hence her cry is for preservation. Toplady says—"God's preservation is the Christian's final perseverance." I know *this*—it is one of the mercies of God to me that He keeps me, preserves me, yea, also one of the greatest mercies of my life that He enables me to see the *truth*, and makes me preach the *truth*—that He preserves me in that *truth*—not allowing men nor devils to induce me to compromise that *truth*. I know the exercise of feeling the terrors of the law, the heavy burden of sin, and the dismal temptations of the prison; but there is a greatness of power which preserves in the midst of all these. Hope—(it may be but feeble!)—but hope given by *the Great Preserver*, cheers and solaces, and soothes; and vile as we are, black as we are, sinful as we are, we look to the blood and to the love that shed it, and can then grasp hold on Christ, and in the triumphant wording of the prophet Isaiah exclaim—"In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory."

And now, before I finish this, my morning sermon, let me quote the solemn words of the Apostle Paul—"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." "*It is appointed unto men once to die*"—then what follows!—"and after this the judgment;" then comes the declaration—"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many"—"of many," (*not of all*.) Observe this deeply! and then the blessed promise to the longing and expecting soul—"Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." He, the Lord Jesus, has come once—He is coming again—He is to appear "a second time without sin!" But what means this! He never had sin! He is Himself the Holy God—"That Holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." What are we to understand then by the words, "He shall appear the second time *without sin* unto salvation?" It is this! that at His second coming, when HE appears the second time, He cometh not to atone for the sins of the Church, not to shed His precious blood again. Redemption work was finished when He came the first time; *blood* was shed *then*. He comes again *without blood*, without having to make atonement by blood *again*! He comes like a triumphant hero to gather together the rewards of His victory, the trophies of His love, to collect His redeemed church, to proclaim the conquests of His own blood; His work was finished at His first advent, and he comes the second time to assert and to claim the rightful glories of His crown. And hence, on the authority of this great Scripture the church is safe, because saved; all the sins of the Elect have been and are atoned for by the complete atonement of the cross, and the moment (listen to me!) is approaching when Christ will come and receive His people to HIMSELF—"without sin unto sal-

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vation!" This is a great! an overwhelming thought! The Church is pardoned, the ELECT are all forgiven, Christ has borne the burden of *their* sins—"Cast them all into the depths of the sea!" and His righteousness is, by imputation *Her's*—"Ye are complete in Him!" "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And as "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," so also there is, and can be *no separation from Him!* But remember! what is the token that we understand the reality of these things, that we are saved, that we are pardoned!—"unto them that look for Him!"—"shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." "THEM THAT LOOK FOR HIM!" O! that looking! and mark me, *looking for Him!* In this we have a test! It is an *everlasting union!* and which nothing can destroy! "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church!"

"I sing the everlasting love
Of JESUS to His Bride,
The bond of union form'd above,
Which none can put aside.
He lov'd and chose her for His own,
Amazing act of grace!
She loves and bows before His throne,

When He reveals His face!
Yes! He betroth'd His church in love,
And will not change His mind;
Nor can He once unfaithful prove,
He's ever just and kind.
Delightful union! Happy bride!
Christ and His church are one;
'Tis His to cherish and provide,
Her life is CHRIST alone."

No change in God. The love of CHRIST is ever the same, an everlasting, love! He has made eternal provision for His Church! It is **FIXED, SETTLED, DECREED!** and she as the weaker vessel looks up entirely for everything to HIM! "*Prisoners of Hope*" hear! and attend to these things!

Now, in finishing this great subject, remember the experimental part of it, and which the text sets before us—"Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee: according to the greatness of Thy power preserve Thou those that are appointed to die." Man, Elect in Christ must be brought to know this *experimentally*—"appointed to die"—condemned, and so to cry for *preservation*. And I must die, you must die, *naturally!* instances are continually occurring of *these things*. Before another Sunday, it may be said of some of us, 'He is gone.' Let me read you a stirring Scripture as I conclude in 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.—"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." I am reading these words slowly on purpose, for it is one of the most tremendous passages in the WORD of GOD, and is a solemn warning to the world. And now, at verse 13, (turning to the Church)—"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which

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ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." Such is God's word. Let me put it solemnly before every thinking man and woman. This is not written in any human book. Mark me! It is God's word! and O! how it separates between the Church and the world, between the Elect and non-Elect, between the everlastingly saved and between the everlastingly lost. May this subject be blessed of God to you. May it be sealed home on and in our hearts. May the realities of the prison-house be experimentally felt and known. May the sighing and the cry, the prayer of every poor prisoner come before God. May He in mercy manifest "the greatness of His power," and so deliver in His own time and way each captive soul "appointed (*as it were*) to die," and bring them out into the LIBERTY of life and peace. Such poor souls alone can and do say with Newton—

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love THE LORD or no!
Am I His, or am I not?"

I shall read the text and finish. May God make it a great blessing. "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee: according to the greatness of Thy power preserve Thou those that are appointed to die."

May God bless the Word for Christ's sake. Amen.

(The following Hymn was sung in the Service.)

" Amidst ten thousand anxious cares,
The world and Satan's deep laid snares,
This my repeated cry shall be,
Jesus, reveal Thyself in me.

" When Sinai's awful thunders roll,
And strike with terror through my soul,
No gleam of comfort can I see,
'Till Jesus is reveal'd in me.

" When by temptations sore oppress'd,
Despair and anguish fill my breast;
All, all is guilt and misery,
'Till Jesus is reveal'd in me.

" When various lusts imperious rise,
And my unguarded soul surprise,
I'm captive led, nor can get free,
'Till Jesus is reveal'd in me.

" When darkness, thick as beamless night,
Hides the Redeemer from my sight,
This, THIS is all my ardent plea,
Jesus, reveal Thyself in me."

The Preacher.

No. LI.

THE TESTIMONY OF OUR VIRTUES.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, SEPTEMBER 5, 1858,

BY THE REV. HENRY MELVILL, B.D.,

(Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty, and Canon Residentiary of St. Paul's.)

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, LONDON.

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"—Hebrews xii. 9.

THERE is a very important and interesting argument involved in this saying of the Apostle—the argument from what we are as men to what we might be, and ought to be, as Christians. A dutiful child submits meekly to a father's correction: why, then, do we not submit meekly to the correction of God? The mere fact of submission to the human goes far towards showing that it is not through any actual inability that we refuse submission to the Divine Parent. The thing required is of the same sort in both cases, and he who can yield it in the one might, if he would, yield it also in the other. The reasoning, in short, is a reasoning from what men are as members of society to what they ought to be as creatures of God; and they may be brought under condemnation if they fail to act towards God, displaying himself under certain characters, as they act towards their fellow-men, who bear these same characters, though only subordinately. In the writings of the prophet Malachi you will find God himself using the argument which is implied, if not advanced in our text. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?" And this reasoning is of very wide application—so that what we may term our social conduct will furnish overwhelming evidence against us at the last, if we are not found amongst those who have loved and served God; for God—and this you should carefully ponder—God asks from us nothing but what we as members of society show ourselves well able both to do and to give. If he demand faith in his word, are we not capable of believing? Are we not accustomed to believe, yea, and to allow our belief to influence our practice whenever there is a sufficiency of testimony? And will not this, our capacity of believing, demonstrated as it is by facts of daily

occurrence, justify our condemnation, if we fail to put faith in the declarations of Scripture? In like manner, if God demand from us gratitude and love, does he demand what we are unable to give? On the contrary, we are so constituted that we naturally feel thankful to a benefactor, and any one of us who could receive kindness, and yet show himself void of all affection towards the giver, would make himself an object of scorn and abhorrence, as wanting the common sensibilities which characterize our nature. If then God manifestly bring himself into the position of a benefactor, if he assume towards us that character, and justify the assumption by continually doing us good, it is very evident that he has right to ask from us in return gratitude and love—that in asking them he only asks what we continually prove ourselves able to give, and that consequently, if we refuse what is asked of us, there will be needed nothing beyond our conduct in the several intercourses of life to prove us without excuse, if finally condemned for not giving God our hearts. And once more—if God ask obedience to his laws and submission to his authority, he asks only what we are in the daily habit of rendering to earthly superiors; nothing is needed but that the authority be unquestionable, and submission follows, for the most part, as a matter of course; so that we are continually proving ourselves all prepared to obey, if the right to command be clearly established. Well, then, if God, reveal himself under the character of a governor, and if he require us to live as his subjects, he may surely appeal to our conduct in reference to earthly magistrates, as proving us without excuse if we wilfully violate his laws.

Thus our text involves a principle of very general application; and we perhaps little think what material of condemnation we heap up against ourselves by the conscientious discharge of every relative duty, while we remain virtually strangers to the power of religion. It is upon this point that we are very anxious to fasten your attention—on the condemning power of social virtues, over and above their non-justifying power. These social virtues prove incontestibly that we are capable of acting agreeably to certain relations in which we stand to others, or in which others stand to us; and if God stand to us, or if we stand to God, in those very relations, why, the social virtues only witness that it is through no unavoidable defect in constitution that we fail to act towards God as those relations demand. They make it clear that he does not ask us for what we have not to give, seeing that they are themselves what he asks; at least they are in reference to the creature what is demanded of us in reference to the Creator. If he ask gratitude for benefits, we are capable of being grateful; if he prove himself a Father, and ask the obedience of sons, we are capable of reverencing a parent; if he show himself our ruler, and require that his authority be respected, we are capable of honouring a governor; if he claim his dues, and demand that we render him his own, we are capable of abhorring dishonesty and maintaining an unimpeachable integrity. Then do not the social virtues—inasmuch as it is only of these after all that God asks the exercise in reference to himself—do they not prove beyond the power of gainsaying, that what is demanded from us is what might be rendered? And will they not condemn us at the last, if found affectionate to every friend but the best, grateful to every benefactor but the chief, obedient to every ruler but the supreme, honourable in every dealing but the largest and the most important?

It is in this way that there is evidently a condemning power in the social

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virtues, and the power will be greater as the virtues are the more conspicuous. The man of great native kindness of heart has evidently less excuse than one of a morose nature for withholding from God the offerings of thankfulness. Where there is an instinctive abhorrence of everything base and dishonourable, there cannot be the shadow of an apology for defrauding God of his dues; where there is a natural love of order and respect for dignity, what can be said in defence of disloyalty towards the Almighty? Where there is a fine generosity, a gushing sensibility, a quick apprehension of what is noble and disinterested, what shall extenuate the indifference to the gospel, with all its mighty tale of love and condescension and conquest? And thus how possible it is that the man who has been literally the ornament and the benefactor of his species, exemplary in the discharge of every relative duty, his word an oath, his friendship a treasure, his heart a well-spring of benevolence, but who all along has been a stranger to godliness, may find himself at last arraigned and condemned on the very ground of his having been so distinguished by whatsoever things are "pure and lovely and of good report;" the very virtues, the very qualities, the very actions, on which he is now perhaps disposed to rest with a sweet complacency, which he may secretly regard as meritorious enough to secure him an everlasting reward—oh! these may rise up against him at the judgment—these may convict him of inexcusableness in having failed in his duties to his Creator—these may be the witnesses that he might have obeyed, and loved, and feared, and honoured, the universal parent, the universal governor: and all upon the principle so clearly involved in the statement of our text—"We have had fathers of our flesh; we have given those fathers reverence: might we not, then—ought we not, then—to have been in subjection to the Father of spirits, and lived?"

Now, I have thus engaged you with the general argument, rather than with the particular case presented by the text. Now, however, we will confine ourselves to that case—the case being that of parents and children, and the implied argument, that the reverence which we show to our earthly father will be a swift witness against us, if we fail in the reverence which is due to our heavenly Father.

There is no more beautiful and graceful affection of our nature than that which subsists between parents and children. We must admire this affection, even as exhibited amongst inferior animals; there is no page in natural history more attractive than that which tells how tenderly the wild beast of the forest will watch her young, or with what assiduousness the fowls of the air will tend their helpless brood. And in the human race the affection goes far beyond this; for if not more intense at the first, it is abiding and reciprocal; the love of a parent for a child does not terminate, as with animals, when that child has grown into strength and asks no further help—it continues through life, increasing, for the most part, rather than diminishing, so that though the child may have been long absent from his home, wandering in foreign lands, or domesticated among strangers, yet can he always reckon that the hearts of his father and mother beat kindly towards him, and he has only to present himself at their door, to unlock a tide of rich sensibilities, and be folded in ardent embraces, and welcomed with a deep gratulation. And this affection of a parent for a child is not merely a graceful and beautiful sentiment, shedding a charm over the privacies of domestic life—it is one of the chief mainsprings of human activity, and contributes perhaps more than

anything else to the keeping together the elements of society. It is quite extraordinary, if you come to think, how this single affection or instinct will tie down a man to unwearied occupation, so that he will toil night and day to gain subsistence for his family. He might betake himself to another scene, where having only himself to provide for, he might live in comparative ease; but his young ones have nestled round his heart—he cannot be tempted by any prospect of relief to desert those who lean on him as a father—and therefore, with a heroism which would draw on itself intense admiration, if it were not so common, he will employ all his energies, and wear down all his strength in obtaining a sufficiency for those beneath his roof. Thus is society virtually knit together by and through parental affection. And you have only to suppose this affection extinguished, so that fathers and mothers cared nothing, or only for a short time, for those to whom they gave life, and you destroy the fine play of a healthful activity, and slacken the bonds which make fast communities. And whilst parents are thus abidingly and profitably actuated by affection for their children, children maintain an affection towards their parents, scarcely less graceful, and scarcely less advantageous. If it have been a very interesting and touching spectacle, that of a mother bending devotedly over her infant, or that of a father spending himself unhesitatingly that he might earn bread for his little ones, certainly it is not a less interesting, and not a less touching, when the couch of the aged parent is sedulously attended by a daughter, or the tottering steps of the old man are sustained by an affectionate son. There is scarce anything which, in our eyes has so much of moral gracefulness and beauty as this return to the parents of all the kindness and assiduousness which flowed forth from them on their offspring—the repayment in reverential attentions and dutiful devotion of benefits received in infancy and childhood. This is not so much an instinct as a principle, and, accordingly, while the Bible contains no precept as to loving children, it contains a most express precept as to honouring parents, so that there is given to the latter the character of a high duty, to whose performance we are urged by a distinct and full promise. And the point to which I have to bring you is, that this duty is very generally and very faithfully performed. Of course there are exceptions, but these provoke unmingled reprobation, as though all the feelings of a community rose up against that unnatural being, a thankless child, and prompted the fitness of casting him from its circles. We hardly know in which case the flow of this tide of indignation is the strongest—whether against the parent who can forsake or ill use a child, or against the child who can desert or dishonour a parent; we are inclined to think that of the two spectacles the latter more moves the popular anger—that of the child deserting or dishonouring a parent. There is a feeling that the parent is deficient in instinct, but that the child is deficient in a principle—that the parent refuses to confer, but that the child refuses to repay an obligation; and thus there is a practical consciousness that there is an ingratitude and a baseness in the unnatural child which can hardly be charged on the unnatural parent—so that while the one has done violence to one of the commonest and strongest principles of our nature, the other has proved himself callous to one of the strongest dictates of morality. But the fact is, that in far the majority of instances the filial, like the parental duties, are carefully discharged. It is comparatively but seldom that children show want of affection towards a father and a mother, when that father and

that mother have done their part as parents; whether it be in the highest or the lowest families of the land, there is generally a frank yielding to its heads of that respect and that gratitude which they have a right to look for from their offspring.

There is no disputing the first statement of the text; for it is the general rule. "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence." But how now as to the inference which St. Paul would draw from this statement? How as to our subjection to another and a higher Father, "the Father of spirits?" If it be the common rule—the exceptions not being such as to bring the rule into question—that children give reverence to their fathers, surely if God be a Father he too will be revered. Once establish the relationship, and the reverence and submission will follow almost of course! Alas! no. God is indeed a Father; the very character under which he has been pleased specially to reveal himself, and under which he encourages us to address him is that of "Our Father in heaven," and never did earthly parent lavish so much tenderness on a child, nor bear with him so gently in his helplessness or waywardness as God in his dealings with every one amongst ourselves. It would be quite idle to compare God in his paternal character with the best of human fathers, for earthly affection is limited in power—even where not defective in steadfastness it often cannot effect what it feels to be for the good of its object, and often through mistake effects what is not. But with God there is unlimited ability, and at the same time unbounded acquaintance with wants and their adequate supply, so that he can neither withhold what would be for our advantage, nor bestow what would not; and when it might have been expected, from the inscrutable majesty of his nature, that he would have come forth under some vast and overwhelming character, fitted to cause the inhabitants of this earth to shrink away in terror, it pleased him to throw open his dwelling place, that there he might be discovered as the universal parent, gathering all his might and all his knowledge into a sort of shield which might be spread over the whole human family, and giving its truth to the touching description,—*"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."*

Therefore I stay not to demonstrate to you the paternal character of him whom our text styles, "the Father of spirits;" it is the character which pervades the whole of revelation, and is outlined by the whole of Providence. The question is not as to whether God acts towards us as a father—it is only whether we act towards God as children; and here comes the melancholy contrast between men as members of particular families, and men as members of the universal family. The very beings who can recognize most cordially the claims of earthly parents, who can yield them a reverence and a homage which give to the domestic picture a rich moral beauty, and who would show themselves virtuously indignant at any tale of filial disobedience or unthankfulness, these have only to be viewed as children of God, and presently they may be convicted of all that unnaturalness, all that ingratitude, all that baseness, on which they are ready to pour unmingled reprobation. You cannot for a moment profess to deny, that in the heart which is all alive to filial emotions, and which beats with so true an affection towards a father and a mother, that the whole strength is centred in the showing them respect and ministering to their comfort, there may be an utter indifference towards the heavenly parent—ay, no more practical remembrance of him "in whom we live, and

move, and have our being," than if it were the heart of one of those blots upon our race, in which all the family charities appear to have been extinguished, or never to have grown. But, then, do you not further perceive how thoroughly self-condemned we must all of us stand, if we act faithfully the part of a child towards an earthly parent, but utterly fail to act that part towards "the Father of spirits?" It will be demonstrable from our own actions that we are quite without excuse, as members of the universal family; we shall be put to shame by our very excellence as members of individual families. God may go, as it were, into our very households, and there, not by the blemishes which he finds, but by the beauties—not by the stormy passions which too often agitate its inmates, but by those lovely affections which give sacredness to our firesides, by the respect which parents feel and expect as their due, by the meek submissiveness of children, by their devoted attention to those who gave them life, by their obedience to their wishes, by their regard to their feelings, may he proceed to make good his charges against us, if it shall be found that having drawn from him our being, been sustained by his bounty and protected by his power, we have yielded him no homage and given him no love. Children! listen ye to this; parents! listen ye to this; children, who are never wanting in dutiful affection towards your parents—parents, who are never unmindful of what you have a right to look for from your children—children, who will do all in your power to soothe the declining years of a father or a mother, who feel it a privilege to pay back by labours of love the tenderness lavished on you from infancy upwards, who attach a sacredness to the every word, and the every wish of persons so beloved and revered—parents, who feel cut to the heart by the ingratitude of a child, who are conscious of being robbed of your incontrovertible rights, whenever a son or a daughter is deficient in attachment and respect—yes, children and parents, listen ye alike to this; ye are self-condemned, ye are swift witnesses against yourselves, if as members of the universal family ye fail to be what ye are as members of particular households; and oh! ye must be speechless at the judgment, if the simple argument of our text should be worked out against you—if the Judge should say to you, "Ye had fathers of your flesh, and ye gave them reverence," and should follow this up by the thrilling and unanswerable question, "Why, then, were ye not in subjection to the Father of spirits, that ye might live?"

I think that you must all be alive to the force of the argument which we have laboured to illustrate. It is simply an argument from what you are in the domestic relations of life to what you might be in reference to God. It takes all the affectionate and beautiful intercourse of parents and children, and employs it in evidence of your inexcusableness, if you fail in what you owe to your heavenly Father. So that never can a child honour a father or mother, and never can a father or mother expect obedience and respect from a child, without recognizing the rights of God as a universal parent, and without making good a charge of wilful fraud, if those rights be withheld. And if, in place of confining the argument to parent and child, we had dwelt more on the word "subjection" in our text—a word which carries our thoughts to master and servant, ruler and subject, we should all see for ourselves that we should have reached a like result. The loyal man who is void of religion, why, he will be condemned by his loyalty; the obedient subject who is void of religion, why, he will be condemned by his obedience; the faithful servant

who is void of religion will be condemned by his fidelity. Yes, within any well regulated household may sufficient evidence be gathered, that those who have not bowed to God's sceptre must be wholly without excuse when arraigned at God's bar. Masters, who know and exact what is due to them from servants—the respect, the attention, the obedience; servants, who render to masters what they are pledged to by their stations in the family, both will be witnesses against themselves, if not found at the last amongst those who have yielded themselves to God. The master who shows by what he requires from a servant that he is aware of the duties of a servant, shows also that he is aware of what he himself owes to God his master in heaven; the servant who by his trustworthiness, his diligence, his respectfulness, proves himself acquainted with what is due to a master. Why, he proves himself also acquainted with what is due from him to God, whose servant he is in a far higher sense, than he is that of any fellow-creature. And thus may the master and servant both be condemned, not by their ignorance, but by their knowledge—not by their wrong practice, but by their right; not by the neglect of relative duties, but by the discharge; and when God hath once made his appeal to the fact, "Ye had fathers of your flesh to whom ye gave reverence." Oh! every man, in every position of life, the master and the servant, the ruler and the ruled, the scholar and the teacher, all will be deprived of any appeal against the sentences of the judgment, if God shall but put the emphatic and overwhelming question, "Why, then, were ye not in subjection to the Father of spirits that ye might live?"

I do not know whether you have been accustomed to follow for yourselves such trains of thought as the words of our text have thus led us to open; but, we own that we regard the subject which has been under discussion as one of no common importance and interest, presenting, as it does, all that is amiable and admirable in domestic life as fraught with testimony to be delivered at the great day of assize. You will observe, that we have had to go much beyond what is commonly advanced in regard to the virtues and excellencies of unconverted men. Not content with denying to those virtues and excellencies any justifying power, as if a man would be saved merely because he was amiable, and benevolent, and trustworthy, and dutiful, we have had to ascribe to them a condemning power. This has been the peculiarity of our present subject, and we should like to gain for it a thorough hold upon your minds. Is there the merchant amongst you of unimpeachable rectitude, who would sooner die than be guilty of a fraud? Why, that man's ledger is one of the books that shall be opened at the judgment; the hatred of everything base which it displays will be a witness against him if he have robbed God of his due. Is there the tradesman who would abhor the over-reaching a customer, and whom nothing could persuade to use the false weight and balance? Why, that man's shop will be referred to hereafter; it will prove him rigidly conscientious towards his fellow-men, and therefore self-condemned if he have defrauded his God. Or, is there a patriot, who with a fine love of liberty, would do and dare nobly to uphold the free institutions of his country? That man's generous ardour will be quoted hereafter; could he be indignant against all lesser tyranny, and yet be excusable in making no struggle against the tyranny of sin? Is there the son or the daughter amongst you who has shown reverence to parents? That man or that woman will have nothing to plead when God shall affirm himself to be a Father, but a Father neglected by his

children. Or, are there servants amongst you, who answer the apostle's description—"Obedient to their own masters, not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity?" Their unblemished characters will rise against them at the judgment; so true to their employers, what shall be said for them if false to their Maker? Ah! it may sound strangely, but nevertheless we may confidently assert, that virtues, the want of which must exclude us from heaven, may themselves doom us to a lower place in hell. Let there be no mistake in the matter; let it not be thought that because the social virtues may help at last to condemn us, therefore they are of no worth, and of no avail whatever. It is not because we gave reverence to the fathers of our flesh that we shall be condemned hereafter; it is not because the servant has been in subjection to his master that he will perish at the judgment. No, no, rather if the son or the daughter have not given reverence to the parent there shall be a stern condemnation; if the servant have not been subject to his master, he shall on that very account be sentenced to the woe of the lost. God will not dispense with a rigid attention to all the relative duties; but our point is, that the child by honouring the father, the servant by obeying the master, gives evidence of a sense of what is due to those who stand to him in certain relations, and of a readiness to yield that due, and therefore proves that it can only be through wilful negligence or proud defiance, that he withholds the due from God the Father who made him, and the Master who redeemed him.

See, therefore, how ye stand, and resolve in the strength of the living God to act as the position demands. Ye cannot be without the social virtues, and yet be approved of God—for true faith will produce them where it does not find them, and promote them where it does. It were nothing but a contradiction in terms to speak of a man as a genuine Christian, ready to stand at the judgment-seat of God, who did not honour his father and mother, or who was not faithful in his stewardship, or who used the false balance, or who did not submit to lawful authority. But then, observe and remember, on the other hand ye cannot have, ye cannot exercise these social virtues, and not be self-condemned, if you have not also godliness; they are confessions of what God has a right to expect at your hands, and therefore what can they be but witnesses against you, what but millstones round your neck, if what God has right to expect you fail to render?

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"Our Father which art in heaven."—Matt. vi. 9.

I THINK there is room for very great doubt, whether our Saviour intended the prayer, of which our text forms a part, to be used in the manner in which it is commonly employed among professing Christians. It is the custom of many persons to repeat it as their morning prayer, and they think that when they have repeated these sacred words they have done enough. I believe that this prayer was never intended for universal use. Jesus Christ taught it not to all men, but to his disciples, and it is a prayer adapted only to those who are the possessors of grace, and are truly converted. In the lips of an ungodly man it is entirely out of place. Doth not one say, "Ye are of your father the devil, for his works ye do?" Why, then, should ye mock God by saying, "Our Father which art in heaven." For how can he be your Father? Have ye two Fathers? And if he be a Father, where is his honour? Where is his love? You neither honour nor love him, and yet you presumptuously and blasphemously approach him, and say, "Our Father," when your heart is attached still to sin, and your life is opposed to his law, and you therefore prove yourself to be an heir of wrath, and not a child of grace! Oh! I beseech you, leave off sacrilegiously employing these sacred words; and until you can in sincerity and truth say, "Our Father which art in heaven," and in your lives seek to honour his holy name, do not offer to him the language of the hypocrite, which is an abomination to him.

I very much question also, whether this prayer was intended to be used by Christ's own disciples as a constant form of prayer. It seems to me that Christ gave it as a model, whereby we are to fashion all our prayers, and I think we may use it to edification, and with great sincerity and earnestness, at certain times and seasons. I have seen an architect form the model of a building he intends to erect of plaster or wood; but I never had an idea that it was intended for me to live in. I have seen an artist trace on a piece of brown paper, perhaps, a design which he intended afterwards to work out on more costly stuff; but I never imagined the design to be the thing itself. This prayer of Christ is a great chart, as it were; but I cannot cross the sea on a chart. It is a map; but a man is not a traveller because he puts his fingers across the map. And so a man may use this form of prayer, and yet be a total stranger to the great design of Christ in teaching it to his disciples. I feel that I cannot use this prayer to the omission of others. Great as it is, it does not express all I desire to say to my Father which is in heaven.

There are many sins which I must confess separately and distinctly; and the various other petitions which this prayer contains require, I feel, to be expanded, when I come before God in private; and I must pour out my heart in the language which his Spirit gives me; and more than that, I must trust in the Spirit to speak the unutterable groanings of my spirit, when my lips cannot actually express all the emotions of my heart. Let none despise this prayer; it is matchless, and if we must have forms of prayer, let us have this first, foremost, and chief; but let none think that Christ would tie his disciples to the constant and only use of this. Let us rather draw near to the throne of the heavenly grace with boldness, as children coming to a father, and let us tell forth our wants and our sorrows in the language which the Holy Spirit teacheth us.

And now, coming to the text, there are several things we shall have to notice here. And first, I shall dwell for a few minutes upon the *double relationship mentioned*: "Our Father which art in heaven." There is *sonship*—"Father;" there is *brotherhood*, for it says, "Our Father;" and if he be the common father of us, then we must be brothers; for there are two relationships, sonship and brotherhood. In the next place, I shall utter a few words upon the spirit which is necessary to help us before we are able to utter this—"The spirit of adoption," whereby we can cry, "Our Father which art in heaven." And then, thirdly, I shall conclude with the *double argument of the text*, for it is really an argument upon which the rest of the prayer is based. "Our Father which art in heaven," is, as it were, a strong argument used before supplication itself is presented.

I. First, THE DOUBLE RELATIONSHIP IMPLIED IN THE TEXT.

We take the first one. Here is *sonship*—"Our Father which art in heaven." How are we to understand this, and in what sense are we the sons and daughters of God? Some say that the Fatherhood of God is universal, and that every man, from the fact of his being created by God, is necessarily God's son, and that therefore every man has a right to approach the throne of God, and say, "Our Father which art in heaven." To that I must demur. I believe that in this prayer we are to come before God, looking upon him not as our Father through creation, but as our Father through adoption and the new birth. I will very briefly state my reasons for this.

I have never been able to see that creation necessarily implies fatherhood. I believe God has made many things that are not his children. Hath he not made the heavens and the earth, the sea and the fulness thereof? and are they his children? You say these are not rational and intelligent beings; but he made the angels, who stand in an eminently high and holy position, are they his children? "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my son?" I do not find, as a rule, that angels are called the children of God; and I must demur to the idea that mere creation brings God necessarily into the relationship of a Father. Doth not the potter make vessels of clay? But is the potter the father of the vase, or of the bottle? No, beloved, it needs something beyond creation to constitute the relationship, and those who can say, "Our Father which art in heaven," are something more than God's creatures: they have been adopted into his family. He has taken them out of the old black family in which they were born; he has washed them, and cleansed them, and given them a new name and a new spirit, and made them "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;" and all this of his own free, sovereign, unmerited, distinguishing grace.

And having adopted them to be his children, he has in the next place, *regenerated them by the Spirit of the living God*. He has "begotten them again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and no man hath a right to claim God as his Father, unless he feeleth in his soul, and believeth, solemnly, through the faith of God's election, that he has been adopted into the

one family of God which is in heaven and earth, and that he has been regenerated or born again.

This relationship also involves *love*. If God be my Father, he loves me. And oh, how he loves me! When God is a Husband he is the best of husbands. Widows, somehow or other, are always well cared for. When God is a Friend, he is the best of friends, and sticketh closer than a brother; and when he is a Father he is the best of fathers. O fathers! perhaps ye do not know how much ye love your children. When they are sick ye find it out, for ye stand by their couches and ye pity them, as their little frames are writhing in pain. Well, "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Ye know how ye love your children too, when they grieve you by their sin; anger arises, and you are ready to chasten them, but no sooner is the tear in their eye, than your hand is heavy, and you feel that you had rather smite yourself than smite them; and every time you smite them you seem to cry, "Oh that I should have thus to afflict my child for his sin! Oh that I could suffer in his stead!" And God, even our Father, "doth not afflict willingly." Is not that a sweet thing? He is, as it were, compelled to it; even the Eternal arm is not willing to do it; it is only his great love and deep wisdom that brings down the blow. But if you want to know your love to your children, you will know it most if they die. David knew that he loved his son Absalom, but he never knew how much he loved him till he heard that he had been slain, and that he had been buried by Joab. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." He knows then how deep and pure is the love that death can never sever, and the terrors of eternity never can unbind. But, parents, although ye love your children much, and ye know it, ye do not know, and ye cannot tell how deep is the unfathomable abyss of the love of God to you. Go out at midnight and consider the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which he hath ordained; and I am sure you will say, "What is man, that thou shouldst be mindful of him?" But, more than all, you will wonder, not at your loving him, but that while he has all these treasures, he should set his heart upon so insignificant a creature as man. And the sonship that God has given us is not a mere name; there is all our Father's great heart given to us in the moment when he claims us as his sons.

But if this sonship involves the love of God to us, it involves also, the duty of *love to God*. Oh! heir of heaven, if thou art God's child, wilt thou not love thy Father? What son is there that loveth not his father? Is he not less than human if he loveth not his sire? Let his name be blotted from the book of remembrance that loveth not the woman that brought him forth, and the father that begat him. And we, the chosen favourites of heaven, adopted and regenerated, shall not we love him? Shall we not say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with thee? My father, I will give thee my heart; thou shalt be the guide of my youth; thou dost love me, and the little heart that I have shall be all thine own for ever."

Furthermore, if we say "Our Father which art in heaven," we must recollect that our being sons involves the duty of *obedience to God*. When I say "My Father," it is not for me to rise up and go in rebellion against his wishes; if he be a father, let me note his commands, and let me reverentially obey; if he hath said "Do this," let me do it, not because I dread him, but because I love him; and if he forbids me to do anything, let me avoid it. There are some persons in the world who have not the spirit of adoption, and they can never be brought to do a thing unless they see some advantage to themselves in it; but with the child of God, there is no motive at all; he can boldly say, "I have never done a right thing since I have followed Christ because I hoped to get to heaven by it, nor have I ever avoided a wrong thing because I was afraid of being damned." For the child

of God knows his good works do not make him acceptable to God, for he was acceptable to God by Jesus Christ long before he had any good works; and the fear of hell does not affect him, for he knows that he is delivered from that, and shall never come into condemnation, having passed from death unto life. He acts from pure love and gratitude, and until we come to that state of mind, I do not think there is such a thing as virtue; for if a man has done what is called a virtuous action because he hoped to get to heaven or to avoid hell by it, whom has he served? Has he not served himself? and what is that but selfishness? But the man who has no hell to fear and no hell to gain, because heaven is his own and hell he never can enter, that man is capable of virtue; for he says—

“Now for the love I bear his name,
What was my gain I count my loss;
I pour contempt on all my shame,
And nail my glory to his cross”—

to his cross who loved, and lived, and died for me who loved him not, but who desires now to love him with all my heart, and soul, and strength.

And now permit me to draw your attention to one encouraging thought that may help to cheer the downcast and Satan-tempted child of God. *Sonship is a thing which all the infirmities of our flesh, and all the sins into which we are hurried by temptation, can never violate or weaken.* A man hath a child; that child on a sudden is bereaved of its senses; it becomes an idiot. What a grief that is to a father, for a child to become a lunatic or an idiot, and to exist only as an animal, apparently without a soul! But the idiot child is a child, and the lunatic child is a child still; and if we are the fathers of such children they are ours, and all the idiocy and all the lunacy that can possibly befall them can never shake the fact that they are our sons. Oh! what a mercy, when we transfer this to God's case and ours! How foolish we are sometimes—how worse than foolish! We may say as David did, “I was as a beast before thee.” God brings before us the truths of his kingdom; we cannot see their beauty, we cannot appreciate them; we seem to be as if we were totally demented, ignorant, unstable, weary, and apt to slide. But, thanks be unto God, we are his children still! And if there be anything worse that can happen to a father than his child becoming a lunatic or an idiot, it is when he grows up to be wicked. It is well said, “Children are doubtful blessings.” I remember to have heard one say, and, as I thought, not very kindly, to a mother with an infant at her breast—“Woman! you may be suckling a viper there.” It stung the mother to the quick, and it was not needful to have said it. But how often is it the fact, that the child that has hung upon its mother's breast, when it grows up, brings that mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave!

“Oh! sharper than a serpent's tooth
To have a thankless child!”

ungodly, vile, debauched—a blasphemer! But mark, brethren: if he be a child he cannot lose his childship, nor we our fatherhood, be he who or what he may. Let him be transported beyond the seas, he is still our son; let us deny him the house, because his conversation might lead others of our children into sin, yet our son he is, and must be; and when the sod shall cover his head, and ours, “father and son” shall still be on the tombstone. The relationship never can be severed as long as time shall last. The prodigal was his father's son, when he was amongst the harlots, and when he was feeding swine; and God's children are God's children anywhere and everywhere, and shall be even unto the end. Nothing can sever that sacred tie, or divide us from his heart.

There is yet another thought that may cheer the Little-faiths and Feeble-minds. *The fatherhood of God is common to all his children.* Ah! Little-faith, you have often looked up to Mr. Great-heart, and you have said, “Oh that I had the courage of Great-heart, that I could wield his sword and cut old giant Grim in pieces! Oh that I could fight the dragons, and that I could overcome the lions! But I am stumbling at every straw, and a shadow makes me afraid.” List thee, Little-faith. Great-heart is God's child, and you are God's child too; and Great-heart is not a whit more God's child than you are. David was the son of God, but not more the son of God than thou. Peter and Paul, the highly-favoured apostles, were of the family of the Most High; and so are you. You have children yourselves; one is a son grown up, and out in business, perhaps, and you have another, a little thing

still in arms. Which is the most your child, the little one or the big one? "Both alike," you say. This "little one is my child, near my heart; and the big one is my child too." And so the little Christian is as much a child of God as the great one.

"This cov'nant stands secure,
Though earth's old pillars bow;
The strong, the feeble, and the weak,
Are one in Jesus now;"

and they are one in the family of God, and no one is ahead of the other. One may have more grace than another, but God does not love one more than another. One may be an older child than another, but he is not more a child; one may do more mighty works, and may bring more glory to his Father, but he whose name is the least in the kingdom of heaven is as much the child of God as he who stands among the king's mighty men. Let this cheer and comfort us, when we draw near to God and say, "Our Father which art in heaven."

I will make but one more remark before I leave this point, namely, this,—that *our being the children of God brings with it innumerable privileges*. Time would fail me, if I were to attempt to read the long roll of the Christian's joyous privileges. I am God's child: if so, he will clothe me; my shoes shall be iron and brass; he will array me with the robe of my Saviour's righteousness, for he has said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him," and he has also said that he will put a crown of pure gold upon my head, and inasmuch as I am a king's son, I shall have a royal crown. Am I his child? Then he will feed me; my bread shall be given me, and my water shall be sure; he that feeds the ravens will never let his children starve. If a good husbandman feeds the barn-door fowl, and the sheep, and the bullocks, certainly his children shall not starve. Does my Father deck the lily, and shall I go naked? Does he feed the fowls of the heaven that sow not, neither do they reap; and shall I feel necessity? God forbid! My Father knoweth what things I have need of before I ask him, and he will give me all I want. If I be his child, then I have a portion in his heart here, and I shall have a portion in his house above; for "if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." "If we suffer with him we shall be also glorified together." And oh! brethren, what a prospect this opens up! The fact of our being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, proves that all things are ours—the gift of God the purchase of a Saviour's blood.

"This world is ours, and worlds to come;
Earth is our lodge, and heaven our home."

Are there crowns? They are mine if I be an heir. Are there thrones? Are there dominions? Are there harps, palm branches, white robes? Are there glories that eye hath not seen? and is there music that ear hath not heard? All these are mine, if I be a child of God. "And it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Talk of princes, and kings, and potentates! Their inheritance is but a pitiful fowl of land, across which the bird's wing can soon direct its flight; but the broad acres of the Christian cannot be measured by eternity. He is rich, without a limit to his wealth; he is blessed, without a boundary to his bliss. All this, and more than I can enumerate, is involved in our being able to say, "Our Father which art in heaven."

The second tie of the text is *brotherhood*. It does not say *my* Father, but *our* Father. Then it seems there are a great many in the family. I will be very brief on this point.

"Our Father." When you pray that prayer, remember you have a good many brothers and sisters that do not know their Father yet, and you must include them all; for all God's elect ones, though they be uncalled as yet, are still his children, though they know it not. In one of Krummacher's beautiful little parables there is a story like this: "Abraham sat one day in the grove at Mamre, leaning his head on his hand, and sorrowing. Then his son Isaac came to him, and said, 'My father, why mournest thou? what aileth thee?' Abraham answered and said, 'My soul mourneth for the people of Canaan, that they know not the Lord, but walk in their own ways, in darkness and foolishness.' 'Oh, my father,' answered the son, is it only this? Let not thy heart be sorrowful; for are not these their own ways?' Then the patriarch rose up from his seat, and said, 'Come now, follow me.' And he led

the youth to a hut, and said to him, 'Behold. There was a child which was imbecile, and the mother sat weeping by it. Abraham asked her, 'Why weepest thou?' Then the mother said, 'Alas, this my son eateth and drinketh, and we minister unto him; but he knows not the face of his father, nor of his mother. Thus his life is lost, and this source of joy is sealed to him.' Is not that a sweet little parable, to teach us how we ought to pray for the many sheep that are not yet of the fold, but which must be brought in? We ought to pray for them, because they do not know their Father. Christ has bought them, and they do not know Christ; the Father has loved them from before the foundation of the world, and yet they know not the face of their Father. When thou sayest "Our Father," think of the many of thy brothers and sisters that are in the back streets of London, that are in the dens and caves of Satan. Think of thy poor brother that is intoxicated with the spirit of the devil; think of him, led astray to infamy, and lust, and perhaps to murder, and in thy prayer pray thou for them who know not the Lord.

"Our Father." That, then, includes those of God's children who differ from us in their doctrine. Ah! there are some that differ from us as wide as the poles; but yet they are God's children. Come, Mr. Bigot, do not kneel down, and say, "My Father," but "Our Father." "If you please, I cannot put in Mr. So-and-So, for I think he is a heretic." Put him in, sir; God has put him in, and you must put him in too, and say, "Our Father." Is it not remarkable how very much alike all God's people are upon their knees? Some time ago at a prayer-meeting I called upon two brothers in Christ to pray one after another, the one a Wesleyan and the other a strong Calvinist, and the Wesleyan prayed the most Calvinistic prayer of the two, I do believe—at least, I could not tell which was which. I listened to see if I could not discern some peculiarity even in their phraseology; but there was none. "Saints in prayer appear as one;" for when they get on their knees, they are all compelled to say "Our Father," and all their language afterwards is of the same sort.

When thou prayest to God, put in the poor; for is he not the Father of many of the poor, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, though they be poor in this world. Come, my sister, if thou bowest thy knee amid the rustling of silk and satin, yet remember the cotton and the print. My brother, is there wealth in thy hand, yet I pray thee, remember thy brethren of the horny hand and the dusty brow; remember those who could not wear what thou wearest, nor eat what thou eatest, but are as Lazarus compared with thee, while thou art as Dives. Pray for them; put them all in the same prayer, and say, "Our Father."

And pray for those that are divided from us by the sea—those that are in heathen lands, scattered like precious salt in the midst of this world's putrefaction. Pray for all that name the name of Jesus, and let thy prayer be a great and comprehensive one. "Our Father, which art in heaven." And after thou hast prayed that, rise up and act it. Say not "Our Father," and then look upon thy brethren with a sneer or a frown. I beseech thee, live like a brother, and act like a brother. Help the needy; cheer the sick; comfort the faint-hearted; go about doing good; minister unto the suffering people of God, wherever thou findest them, and let the world take knowledge of thee, that thou art when on thy feet what thou art upon thy knees—that thou art a brother unto all the brotherhood of Christ, a brother born for adversity, like thy Master himself.

II. Having thus expounded the double relationship, I have left myself but little time for a very important part of the subject, namely, THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION.

I am extremely puzzled and bewildered how to explain to the ungodly what is the spirit with which we must be filled, before we can pray this prayer. If I had a founding here, one who had never seen either father or mother, I think I should have a very great difficulty in trying to make him understand what are the feelings of a child towards its father. Poor little thing, he has been under tutors and governors; he has learned to respect them for their kindness, or to fear them for their austerity; but there never can be in that child's heart that love towards tutor or governor, however kind he may be, that there is in the heart of another child towards his own mother or father. There is a nameless charm there: we cannot describe or understand it: it is a sacred touch of nature, a throb in the breast that God has put there, and that cannot be taken away. The fatherhood is recognized by the childhood of the child. And what is that spirit of a child—that sweet spirit that makes him recognize and love his father? I cannot tell you unless you are a child yourself, and then you will know. And what is "the spirit of adoption,

whereby we cry Abba, Father?" I cannot tell you; but if you have felt it you will know it. It is a sweet compound of faith that knows God to be my Father, love that loves him as my Father, joy that rejoices in him as my Father, fear that trembles to disobey him because he is my Father, and a confident affection and trustfulness that relies upon him, and casts itself wholly upon him, because it knows by the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit, that Jehovah, the God of earth and heaven, is the Father of my heart. Oh! have you ever felt the spirit of adoption? There is nought like it beneath the sky. Save heaven itself there is nought more blissful than to enjoy that spirit of adoption. Oh! when the wind of trouble is blowing, and waves of adversity are rising, and the ship is reeling to the rock, how sweet then to say "My Father," and to believe that his strong hand is on the helm!—when the bones are aching, and when the loins are filled with pain, and when the cup is brimming with wormwood and gall, to say "My Father," and seeing that Father's hand holding the cup to the lip, to drink it steadily to the very dregs, because we can say, "My Father, not my will, but thine be done." Well says Martin Luther, in his Exposition of the Galatians, "There is more eloquence in that word, 'Abba, Father,' than in all the orations of Demosthenes or Cicero put together." "My Father!" Oh! there is music there; there is eloquence there; there is the very essence of heaven's own bliss in that word, "My Father," when applied to God, and when said by us with an unfaltering tongue, through the inspiration of the Spirit of the living God.

My hearers, have you the spirit of adoption? If not, ye are miserable men. May God himself bring you to know him! May he teach you your need of him! May he lead you to the cross of Christ, and help you to look to your dying Brother! May he bathe you in the blood that flowed from his open wounds, and then, accepted in the beloved, may you rejoice that you have the honour to be one of that sacred family.

III. And now, in the last place, I said that there was in the title, A DOUBLE ARGUMENT. "Our Father." That is, "Lord, hear what I have got to say. Thou art my Father." If I come before a judge I have no right to expect that he shall hear me at any particular season in aught that I have to say. If I came merely to crave for some boon or benefit to myself, if the law were on my side, then I could demand an audience at his hands; but when I come as a law-breaker, and only come to crave for mercy, or for favours I deserve not, I have no right to expect to be heard. But a child, even though he is erring, always expects his father will hear what he has to say. "Lord, if I call thee King thou wilt say, 'Thou art a rebellious subject; get thee gone.' If I call thee Judge thou wilt say, 'Be still, or out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee.' If I call thee Creator thou wilt say unto me, 'It repenteth me that I made man upon the earth.' If I call thee my Preserver thou wilt say unto me, 'I have preserved thee, but thou hast rebelled against me.' But if I call thee Father, all my sinfulness doth not invalidate my claim. If thou be my Father, then thou lovest me; if I be thy child, then thou wilt regard me, and poor though my language be, thou wilt not despise it." If a child were called upon to speak in the presence of a number of persons, how very much alarmed he would be lest he should not use right language. I may sometimes feel when I have to address a mighty auditory, lest I should not select choice words, full well knowing that if I were to preach as I never shall, like the mightiest of orators, I should always have enough of carping critics to rail at me. But if I had my father here, and if you could all stand in the relationship of father to me, I should not be very particular what language I used. When I talk to my Father I am not afraid he will misunderstand me; if I put my words a little out of place he understands my meaning somehow. When we are little children we only prattle; still our father understands us. Our children talk a great deal more like Dutchmen than Englishmen when they begin to talk, and strangers come in and say, "Dear me, what is the child talking about?" But we know what it is, and though in what they say there may not be an intelligible sound that any one could print, and a reader make it out, we know they have got certain little wants, and having a way of expressing their desires, and we can understand them. So when we come to God, our prayers are little broken things; we cannot put them together; but our Father, he will hear us. Oh! what a beginning is "Our Father," to a prayer full of faults, and a foolish prayer perhaps, a prayer in which we are going to ask what we ought not to ask for! "Father, forgive the language! forgive the matter!" As one dear brother said the other day at the prayer meeting.

He could not get on in prayer, and he finished up on a sudden by saying, "Lord, I cannot pray to-night as I should wish; I cannot put the words together; Lord, take the meaning, take the meaning," and sat down. That is just what David said once, "Lo, all my desire is before thee"—not my words, but my desire, and God could read it. We should say, "Our Father," because that is a reason why God should hear what we have to say.

But there is another argument. "Our Father." "Lord, give me what I want." If I come to a stranger, I have no right to expect he will give it me. He may out of his charity; but if I come to a father, I have a claim, a sacred claim. My Father, I shall have no need to use arguments to move thy bosom; I shall not have to speak to thee as the beggar who crieth in the street: for because thou art my Father thou knowest my wants, and thou art willing to relieve me. It is thy business to relieve me; I can come confidently to thee, knowing thou wilt give me all I want. If we ask our Father for anything when we are little children, we are under an obligation certainly; but it is an obligation we never feel. If you were hungry and your father fed you, would you feel an obligation like you would if you went into the house of a stranger? You go into a stranger's house trembling, and you tell him you are hungry. Will he feed you? He says yes, he will give you somewhat; but if you go to your father's table, almost without asking, you sit down as a matter of course, and feast to your full, and you rise and go, and feel you are indebted to him; but there is not a grievous sense of obligation. Now, we are all deeply under obligation to God, but it is a child's obligation—an obligation which impels us to gratitude, but which does not constrain us to feel that we have been demeaned by it. Oh! if he were not my Father, how could I expect that he would relieve my wants? But since he is my Father, he will, he must hear my prayers, and answer the voice of my crying, and supply all my needs out of the riches of his fulness in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Has your father treated you badly lately? I have this word to you, then; your father loves you quite as much when he treats you roughly as when he treats you kindly. There is often more love in an angry father's heart than there is in the heart of a father who is too kind. I will suppose a case. Suppose there were two fathers, and their two sons went away to some remote part of the earth where idolatry is still practised. Suppose these two sons were decoyed and deluded into idolatry. The news comes to England, and the first father is very angry. His son, his own son, has forsaken the religion of Christ and become an idolater. The second father says, "Well, if it will help him in trade I don't care; if he gets on the better by it, all well and good." Now, which loves most, the angry father, or the father who treats the matter with complacency? Why, the angry father is the best. He loves his son; therefore he cannot give away his son's soul for gold. Give me a father that is angry with my sins, and that seeks to bring me back, even though it be by chastisement. Thank God you have got a father that can be angry, but that loves you as much when he is angry as when he smiles upon you.

Go away with that upon your mind, and rejoice. But if you love not God and fear him not, go home, I beseech you, to confess your sins, and to seek mercy through the blood of Christ; and may this sermon be made useful in bringing you into the family of Christ, though you have strayed from him long; and though his love has followed you long in vain, may it now find you, and bring you to his house rejoicing!

The Pulpit.

No. LII.

WHY FAITH OBTAINS A GOOD REPORT.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, SEPTEMBER 12, 1858,

BY THE REV. HENRY MELVILL, B.D.,

(Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty, and Canon Residentiary of St. Paul's,)

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, LONDON.

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise."—
Hebrews xi. 39.

THE point in these words on which we wish to fasten is, that it was through faith that the worthies of whom St. Paul speaks obtained "a good report." There is here a distinct assertion that faith, and nothing but faith, gained for the most distinguished saints their high pre-eminence; that if they enjoyed a larger than the ordinary share of Divine favour, it was in consequence of their believing with a more than common steadfastness. Neither does our text stand alone in furnishing such a representation. Throughout Scripture, faith is represented as most acceptable to God, and as securing to man the highest privileges and recompences. And it is on this very account that the gospel is so distasteful to numbers; that numbers would reject it, and devise a better theology for themselves. The adversaries of our religion have always professed to count it equally strange and unwarrantable that faith should be so highly dignified; that such extraordinary prevalence and worth should be ascribed to a principle, which, on their calculation, possesses no moral excellence whatsoever; but after all—thus it is they argue—faith is no voluntary thing, depending on man's will; it cannot be withheld where there is sufficiency of evidence, and it ought not to be given where there is not. If there be sufficient evidence, the mind indeed yields, but what virtue can there be in its yielding? It only does that, about which it had no option, and why should it then "obtain a good report?" If there be not sufficient evidence, not sufficient, at least with reference to the infirmity of the understanding, faith will assuredly be nothing but credulity; and shall a man, under such circumstances, be condemned for not believing? Shall he not rather be applauded for his right use of reason, and his refusal to believe on inadequate authority?

Well, this is worth looking into: we must see whether faith be a sufficient warrant for "a good report;" we must see whether the faith demanded of us

in Scripture, be indeed only what our adversaries represent—whether there be any fairness in the aspersions cast upon the gospel, as if it ascribed excellence to a principle which is really of no worth, and made the attainments of its blessings, contingent on an act of the mind which may be said to be involuntary where there is evidence enough, and credulity where there is not. Follow us carefully into the inquiry. We hope to show you that the faith of which such lofty things are said, and to which such recompenses are assigned, in the pages of Holy Writ might well be expected to obtain the commendations and ensure the advantages.

We hope to do this in two ways: considering, in the first place, what there is to be overcome ere a man can have the faith required by the gospel; and in the next place, what there is to be done when a man is possessed of that faith. And we trust, when we shall have carefully examined what may be termed the preliminaries and the consequences of faith, you will be prepared to allow that there is nothing strange in an apostle speaking of the most eminent men as “having obtained a good report through faith.”

Now, it is very easy, but very unfair, to speak of faith as an act of the mind, which only follows where there is testimony enough, and over which therefore a man has little or no control, and which, consequently, ought not to be made the test or criterion of any moral qualities. We call this unfair, because it takes no account of the influence which the affections exert over the understanding, in consequence of which a man will readily believe some things and positively disbelieve others, though there shall be no difference in the two cases in the amount of furnished testimony. Just think for yourselves: if I bring you intelligence of a matter in which you have no personal concern, which you have no interest whatever in either proving or disproving, the mind is likely to be fairly impartial, and to give its decision on a just estimate of the evidence which I adduce. But suppose the intelligence to be of an obnoxious and troublesome character, suppose that if proved true it will compel you to exercises or sacrifices which you shrink from being called upon to make. Here is a widely different case. The strongest feelings of man will be at once up in arms, and we shall find it needful to make assurance doubly sure before we can gain credit for the unpalatable truth. Apply this to the matter of revealed religion. Why, it is hardly possible for you to imagine a book containing more than the Bible contains of truths against which there is a strong repugnance in the human mind. Let then the Bible with all its credentials, with all that mighty garniture of evidence which has been gathered to it from the spoils of many centuries, be submitted for the first time to a man whose reason is in full vigour for investigating truth; is he likely to feel any pleasure in the doctrines of the Bible? Are they such as he can be supposed to feel any wish to find and prove true? No; these doctrines present him with a portrait of himself, whose accuracy he must undoubtedly be unwilling to admit. If he receive them as true, he must forthwith regard himself a depraved and miserable being, void of all goodness, exposed to utter ruin, possessing no ability whatever of propitiating the being whose wrath he has provoked. Heretofore he may have cherished high notions of himself, imagining that he was endowed with powers and exercised virtues which would suffice to secure him the favour of his Maker; but henceforward, if indeed he admit the truth of the document now under debate, there must be an end of all these towering thoughts; he must be content to sit in the dust

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and clothe himself with sackcloth, and acknowledge his will to be inclined only to evil, and his heart to be "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." And though, indeed, the Bible, not content with exposing to him his condition, offers him a remedy, nevertheless this remedy itself is offensive to his pride, for salvation through the death and righteousness of one executed as a malefactor is no inviting proffer to a man puffed up with thoughts of his own excellence. Moreover, he cannot fail to perceive, that if he give his belief to the document in question, he at once pledges himself to a life of hardship and self-denial, to a mortification of the flesh, a renunciation of the things he best loves, and an expectation of others of whose realities he can gain no sensible evidence. Now tell me, is it fair to say of a man who receives as true a document thus humbling to himself, thus imposing duties from which nature shrinks—is it fair to say of him that he merely yields to a certain amount of testimony, an amount which left him no choice, but which, making faith involuntary, prevented the possibility of its being in any degree commendable? Nay, this is altogether wrong; even the evidences of the Christian religion are not such as leave no option to the student; they are such as will be sure to prove convincing where there is diligent and candid inquiry, where there is a wish to ascertain truth, and a determination to obey it when once ascertained; but it is not such a testimony as is sure to prevail even in the absence of all such qualifications; it is not a task addressing itself to the senses, graven on the earth, or glaring from the firmament, and forcing conviction alike on the careless and the diligent. It is, on the contrary, a testimony which may be overlooked by indolence, and overcome by prejudices. It will not ordinarily commend itself to the man who sits down to its investigation with hostile feelings, and bitter prepossessions, hoping to to be able to reject it as defective. Therefore you cannot say of the man who yields to this evidences that he only submits to what could not be withstood. He might have resisted, he would have resisted, had he not brought to the inquiry a teachable spirit, a sincere wish to discover truth, and a fixed resolve to conform to its dictates. But go beyond the evidence, to the truths which revelation unfolds; and you will see still more clearly that believing presupposes the possession, or requires the exercise of dispositions which are confessedly excellent. There must be humility in him who believes, for from the heart he confesses himself unclean and undone. There must be the submission of the understanding to God; for much has to be received which cannot be explained. There must be a willingness to suffer, for Christianity summons to tribulation. There must be a willingness to labour, for Christianity sets a man about the most arduous duties. What then? Is faith nothing more than our adversaries represent? Is it an involuntary act depending simply on the quantity of evidence, and, therefore, wholly unworthy of being exalted into a condition for the bestowment of blessing? Is it nothing that in him who believes there must be candour, freedom from prejudice, sincerity of purpose, an abandonment of all good opinion of himself, an entire resignation of his judgment to God, a willingness to submit to insult, a determination to enter into combat with the world, the flesh, and the devil? Are we to be told that though there must indeed be this great confirmation in every man who cordially believes in this revelation, it is, nevertheless, a surprising thing that faith should be so dignified in the Bible, that it should be used as a test for admission into the privileges of the Gospel? For our own part,

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when we consider what faith presupposes, what obstacles there are in the very constitution of man to the belief of Christian truths, we can only feel that if God's Spirit did not work in the human heart, the whole world would be infidel. We are amazed when we consider steadfastly what violence is done to the strongest inclinations, what restraints put on the most vehement passions, what contempt there must be of reproach, what self-abasement, what reverence of God, what resolution to love all who receive from the heart the Bible as divine. We do not know any achievement so remarkable, so little to have been expected from a proud, prejudiced, and depraved creature such as man naturally is, as the believing in a record so humiliating, so condemnatory of lust, so rigid in enjoining difficulties as is the gospel of Jesus Christ. You might tell us of great exploits, of splendid deeds which had earned for those who wrought them surpassing renown. But we should not fear that any of the heroes had done a nobler or a more admirable thing than is effected by any one who exercises the faith of which my text speaks. Let philosophy give us its catalogue of men who have been great by intellectual research and scientific discovery; let history cause to pass before our view the champions of freedom and the ornaments of chivalry; we are searching for moral greatness, for the tokens of a genuine love of truth, of a fine openness to conviction, of a mastery won over the fiercest enemies, even the passions and prejudices of a depraved nature; and nowhere do we find these in anything of a like strength as in the belief of a revelation such as the Bible contains, nowhere do we find such evidence of a submissiveness yet intrepidity of spirit, of an unbiassed judgment, of a lofty courage, of a generous devotedness, of a steadfast fortitude; and, therefore, while the world may prescribe other paths of renown, and give other cause why this or that man should be held in remembrance, we can feel it to be quite worthy of God that he has exalted belief in his Word into the condition of his favour, and made it a passport to the richest honours which he has to bestow. Yes, give place, ye great ones of the earth, who have drawn the homage of your fellow-men by penetrating the secrets of nature, improving the arts, advancing the commerce, strengthening the institutions, or subduing the enemies of your country—we would bow before a lowlier and nevertheless a more illustrious throng; we would find a higher title to respect; and we see that throng, and we acknowledge that title in those of whom an apostle could say—"These all obtained a good report through faith."

Let us advance a step further: let us proceed from the preliminaries, as they may be called, to the consequences of faith, and we shall find other warrant for that good report of which our text speaks; for faith, you observe, cannot be a barren or an uninfluential principle. It is not so with regard to inferior truths; much less can it be so in regard to the truths of the Bible. We must fairly conclude that there is no genuine belief in the doctrines of Scripture when the professed believer is only just what he might have been had no such doctrines been revealed. They are confessedly doctrines in which, if their truth be once admitted, man has the strongest possible interest, and we must therefore be justified in concluding, as we would do in a matter of common and every day life, that all real faith is wanting where they do not influence the conduct. Excluding, then, the great mass of mere nominal believers, we speak of genuine faith, and the effects which it has a natural tendency to produce. Let us fasten on certain of the doctrines which God

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has revealed, and certain of the virtues which God demands, and let us see whether faith in the one will not be of necessity productive of the others. For example, it is a portion of the scriptural revelation that God is Omniscient and Omnipresent, that nothing can be hid from his scrutiny, but that he is ever at hand, a vigilant inspector, to note human actions, and register them for judgment. Can this be really believed, and yet the believer fail to be intensely earnest to approve himself in God's sight? Will he ever think himself in a solitude, ever act as alone and unobserved? Will not rather his faith produce a holy reverence, an awful fear of the Almighty, and make him walk circumspectly, because walking side by side with his Maker and his Judge? The Bible tells him, moreover, of an amazing scheme of rescue planned and executed by God on behalf of himself and his fellow-men, sets God before him, as giving his own Son, and that Son as giving himself to ignominy and death, that pardon might be placed within the reach of the sinful; and dilates in the most moving terms on the unwearied loving-kindness of our heavenly Father, who willeth not the death of a sinner, bears with a thousand indignities and repulses, and presses eternal life on those who give him nothing but ingratitude and scorn. Can this be believed, and yet the believer not glow with intense love towards a gracious and benevolent God, who has done such surprising things for his good; yea, and toward his fellow-men, seeing that they are objects of the same mercy with himself, and therefore equally precious in the sight of his Creator? Oh, will not faith, genuine faith in the mighty truths of redemption make a man feel as an affectionate son towards God, and as an affectionate brother towards all men? And yet further, along with the revelation of this amazing scheme of mercy, the Bible sets forth conditions apart from which we can have no share in the blessings procured by Christ's death, imposing duties on the performance of which our future portion is made to depend, and annexing promises and threatenings, just as though we were to be judged by our own works, irrespective of the work of the Redeemer. It tells us of a heaven, and it tells us of a hell; and dealing with us as accountable creatures, creatures therefore who are free to choose, and who are left to determine for themselves whether they will be eternally wretched or eternally happy, it conjures us by the joys of the one state and the terrors of the other, to live soberly, righteously and godly in the world. Who believes this? The man who lives as though there were no heaven, as though there were no hell, doing the very things, obeying the very passions, neglecting the very duties which are respectively forbidden, or commended to all who hope to find mercy hereafter? Impossible! these things cannot be believed by the sensual man, or the covetous, or the proud, or the ambitious. Faith in these things must animate to efforts, to obedience, to self-denial. He who is really a believer in the revealed truths as to man's everlasting state, and the indissoluble connection between conduct here and condition hereafter, will necessarily be one who struggles for mastery, and wages continual war with nature, the flesh, and the devil.

Time would fail us were we to go on enumerating all the graces of which faith is the parent, and the deeds which, by God's help it enables us to do. Humility, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance—is there one of these which does not spring naturally from faith in such doctrines as are recorded in Scripture? And is it not manifest that the degree in which it subsists will be proportioned to the strength of the principle of belief?

And the resisting temptation, the overcoming evil, the subjugating unruly desires, the being resigned under affliction, the triumphing over death—who can fail to perceive that all these are the direct produce of faith? In other words, there is a most intimate and necessary connection between believing what the Bible reveals and doing what the Bible enjoins, or acquiring what the Bible promises. Do not say that we ascribe too much to faith because ascribing more than seems exemplified in many whom you reckon as believers. We speak of the necessary tendencies and consequences of a principle. It is in vain to oppose to these the inconsistencies of men in whom you assume the principles to be dominant. It may be that their faith is not genuine; but not that the genuine faith is not what we have described. Now we have given you a brief summary of the statements in regard to the tendencies and consequences of faith. Will you any longer consider faith as a barren isolated act? Will you any longer marvel that in the distribution of heavenly honours faith should have a position of eminence and renown? A man who has faith, genuine faith, in the truths revealed to us in Scripture, will be a man continually possessed by a sense of God's presence—so that in the crowd, in the solitude, by day and by night he will equally feel under the eye of his Maker, be conscious that he is observed, and be vigilant accordingly over thought and action and word. He will, moreover, be one in whose breast glows a love the most ardent towards God and his fellow-men. Constrained by the mercies of redemption he will adore gratefully the Being who counted nothing too costly for his ransom, and view in all around the purchase of the same blood and the members of the same household. Neither is this all; the man of faith is the man of effort; the man who struggles with corrupt passions, who strives to be holy, and cultivates whatsoever things are lovely and of good report—who makes time subservient to eternity, and life the seed time of immortality. This it is to be a believer, this it is to have what cavillers would represent as the involuntary, the uninfluential, the worthless principle of faith. Who will match this principle? Conquerors and heroes, who have demolished kingdoms, here are men who have done more—men who, through faith, have vanquished themselves, the world, and the devil. Men of science who have penetrated abstruse truths, here ye are surpassed, here are men who through faith have become acquainted with the origin and centre of all truth, with God himself—that mystery which includes every other. Philosophers who have weighed the mountains and numbered the stars, confess yourselves outdone; these are men, who, through faith, have scanned the invisible world, trodden its golden streets, and looked on that firmament of which the Lord God Almighty is himself the sun. Moralists and sages, who have invented maxims and recommended virtues, withdraw from the scene; here are men, who, through faith, have practised what you could only preach, and been what you could only imagine. Yes, conquerors, men of science, philosophers, moralists, we bid you all give place, we have finer warriors to show, and men of more illustrious learning, the cultivators of purer and loftier virtues, and these are they to whom St. Paul's description applies—"They who have obtained a good report through faith."

Now, we would hope that there has been enough in these remarks on the preliminaries and the consequences of faith in the statements of Scripture to prove with how little justice the common objections raised, that faith is made of too much importance in Scripture, that more weight is attached to it than from

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its nature it ought ever to have. Believing and not believing—on these undoubtedly, everything is made to depend. He that believeth is to be saved, and he that believeth not is to be damned. "Strange doctrine," say the adversaries of Christianity. Faith which is a matter of course if there be evidence enough, and which is nothing but credulity if there be not—faith is substituted for all that has any real excellence, or accepted in the stead of piety and virtue. But, we reply, the doctrine is not at all strange; we urge that our adversaries misrepresent faith; we show that in order to a man's believing he must have certain dispositions, and those such as God might be expected to approve, and that as a consequence on his believing he will make certain sacrifices and perform certain duties, and thus give the best proof of his acknowledgment and reverence of the Moral Governor of the Universe. There is no strangeness then at all. Faith is precisely that condition of the soul which such a being as God might have been expected to approve; for having given the revelation contained in the Bible, to require faith in its disclosures is to require that the understanding submit itself, that pride be cut down, that the flesh be crucified with its affections and lusts, and that every energy be consecrated to his service—where then is the marvel if he have been pleased to ordain that it should be through faith that men should obtain a good report? Finally, to impress, if possible, the argument on every hearer, we will represent the nature and achievement of this principle of faith. We—you and I, live in the midst of allurements and temptations, what is without conspiring with what is within to bind us to earth, and to make us cleave to it as our home and our all, and whilst we are thus entangled and engrossed, there comes a revelation from the invisible God, a revelation of amazing wonder connected with his nature, and with his purpose towards ourselves—his guilty and depraved creatures: in this revelation you and I are bidden to believe, bidden on the express declaration that in return for our faith we shall be admitted into the presence which thought cannot measure. And is it an easy thing to believe? Easy! It is to lay aside prejudice, it is to become as little children, it is to submit implicitly to God's authority. Easy! it is to abandon what we love, to forego what we desire, to do what we dislike, to endure what we dread. Easy! it is to cut off the right hand, pluck out the right eye, wrestle with principalities and powers, despise death, and anticipate futurity. Easy! do it ye who count it so easy. Ye who make so light of believing—believe. Ye who represent faith as a mere nothing—have faith. You would invite us to some great and hard achievement, we would invite you to a greater and harder; we match believing against your doing, we match it in difficulty, we match its results; there is nothing which you admire which we may not attempt in our own strength, but we must have the power of the Lord God Almighty ere we can believe in him whom he hath sent. Oh, I wonder not that so much virtue should be ascribed to faith, so much of honour put upon it! I wonder not if even angels, they to whom all is sight, look admiringly on believers as they dare and do in reliance on the word of their God. Look at what a spectacle is presented to those glorious beings! Here is a frail creature, with craving appetites and imperious desires, placed in a world teeming with objects which those appetites demand, and to which those desires instigate; and there is brought in a message from a God whom he cannot see, telling him of a brighter world than that which he inhabits, and into which through the merits of the Mediator, he shall pass at death, if he believe in the record

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which has been given him as divine. He strains his gaze, but he cannot catch a glimpse of this glorious land; the world around him is full of beauties on which he can look—melodies to which he can listen, delicacies which he can taste, flatteries which he can relish; but the other world, of which he is told, cannot appeal to his senses. It may have loveliness but he cannot behold it; it may have minstrelsy, but he cannot hear it; it may have glory, but he cannot feel it. Nevertheless, through faith, he prefers the invisible to the visible, and simply on the warrant of God's word renounces what solicits him through his bodily organs, denies his passions, withstands his desires, fastens all his hopes on a far off country which he cannot visit, to certify himself of its existence, and which can be reached only through death. What can give such honour unto God? Where can there be such confidence—such obedience? Angels may well gaze with admiration on the spectacle. They have always beheld God, they have always beheld the bright land, and to them, therefore, there has not been the trial of abandoning a proved and felt good, for one of which they had testimony, indeed, but no experience. Well, then, may they welcome believers with lofty gratulations. Other planets may send in crowds of heirs of immortality, beings to whom God has manifested himself in open vision, and who have lived like themselves in open intercourse with heaven; but from this earth will be gathered those who shall most wake the song of wonder and of praise. According to the representation of the Book of Revelation, there shall be a circle nearer to the throne of God than that filled by cherubim and seraphim, and of the occupants of this—and God grant that we may be amongst them—of the occupants of this, a proclamation shall be heard through the length and breadth of the celestial courts—"These are they that obtained a good report through faith."

"THE RULER OF THE SEA AND STILLER OF THE STORM."

A Sermon

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE,
WINCHELSEA, SUSSEX, BY THE RECTOR,

THE REV. J. J. WEST, M.A.,

ON THURSDAY MORNING, JULY 15TH, 1858.*

"Thou rulest the raging of the sea : when the waves thereof arise Thou stillest them."—Psalm. lxxxix. 9.

FROM the pause which I have made in giving out that text, you may have observed, my hearers, that I was exercised about one,—this is often so ;—may that which I have taken be for the glory of God, and the edification and comfort of His people. It contains, in few words, great and vast realities ; the experimental child of God will understand this,—exercised sinners know something about these things,—every day, every hour, realizes more and more the fact that the pathway of the church is narrow, it is the way of trial and temptation. It is so everywhere, and whether I refer to those in the midst of the masses of the City of London, or the few here and there in this lonely place at Winchelsea, where we are, as it were, like sparrows alone on the housetop, the case and experience is the same. This text will be, I think, appreciated by my Thursday flock, when, generally speaking, I am preaching to those who are in earnest, who are seekers after truth, and who know what trials, and harrassings, and temptations mean ; it sets before us that which suits the case of the poor, the tried, the exercised, the tempest-tossed, weather-beaten sinner. In the first hymn we sung we have in its five verses the reality set forth.

"The billows swell, the winds are high,
Clouds overcast my wintry sky ;
Out of the depths to THEE I call,
My fears are great, my strength is small.

"O Lord, the pilot's part perform,
And guide and guard me through the storm ;
Defend me from each threat'ning ill,
Control the waves, say, 'Peace, be still.'

"Amidst the roaring of the sea,
My soul still hangs her hope on thee ;

Thy constant love, thy watchful care,
Is all that saves me from despair.

"Dangers of every shape and name,
Attend the followers of the Lamb,
Who leave the world's deceitful shore,
But leave it to return no more.

"Though tempest-tossed, and half a wreck,
My Saviour through the floods I seek ;
Let neither winds nor stormy main
Force back my shattered bark again."

Could you feelingly sing that hymn ? Do you know it experimentally ?—practically ? It is a solemn thing to utter such words in the house of God without we feel and really know something about them ! It is only those who realize the swelling billows, and the high and stormy winds, and the cloudy sky who can sing that hymn experimentally ! I can imagine an accomplished lady, at a fashionable evening party, sitting down and singing from her song-book to please and amuse the company ; but here in this house it is a solemn thing to attempt the work of praise, it must be heart-

* The Sermon was taken down at the time by a stranger in the congregation.

service, it must be "with the spirit and with the understanding." We are here in the presence, as it were, "of the King of kings," the "Lord of lords," under the eye of the GREAT Bishop of the one church. And here it is that I am to preach to the poor, and the needy, the exercised, and the tried, the gospel of Christ, and to proclaim the message of peace and salvation to the sinner—"as cold waters to a thirsty soul, so good news from a far country."

We know, at this moment, from the intense heat of the weather, what it is to be very hot, so the simile in Proverbs, "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so good news from a far country." May I now be made a bearer of good news, a messenger of joyful tidings; but I shall only be such to poor thirsting sinners. "Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them."

And now to preach on the text. First, "Thou rulest!"

Here then is the sovereignty of Jehovah! This is a special and a testing doctrine. Depend on it there will always exist in every man and woman not "born from above," however naturally amiable, or moral, or respectable, or "almost Christian" they may be, enmity against the truth till the sinner is taught and made to see the sovereignty of God. Persons may make a great profession, may pass current, and be considered as Christians, but "profession is not possession," external noise, and form, and show, is not the hidden inner man, the real work of God upon the soul.

The sinner really made to differ, owns Jehovah as an absolute sovereign; and confessing his sins, and crying for mercy, is as nothing before him.

"THOU RULEST," here then is an Almighty Sovereign—earthly sovereigns have only a limited power. Queen Victoria (God bless the Queen) reigns, by divine permission, over her own England. But the God of whom I preach is King of kings, he is "Lord of lords," an absolute and everlasting King. The memorable inscription over His once dying head, on Calvary's cross, placed there by the judge that delivered Him to be crucified, was not to be altered; the chief priests attempted this, but "what I have written I have written," marked the decree of One ruling over all, and stereotyped above the head of our all glorious Christ was seen the title, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."

When I was an Arminian I held not, I preached not the sovereignty of God; but when He brought me down low at His feet, showed me my sinfulness, and taught me my utter helplessness, stripped me of creature merit, and made me cry for mercy and for pardon, *then*, then He proclaimed Himself to my broken heart as Ruler and as King.

"THOU RULEST!" God is so,—*"He ruleth by His power for ever,"* and after the "counsel of His own will." "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. iv. 35.)

I carry the doctrine of predestination out so fully, that I believe, that not a "sparrow shall fall on the ground without our Father." I believe in each and every sparrow-falling providence—that every event has a purpose—that there is no such thing as chance—that grace sets us above the infidelity of second causes, and that it is the special mercy of God to His people, when He makes us see and believe that He orders all things in heaven and earth—and the pillow, the only pillow for the often aching head and heart of His child to rest on, is the conviction that nothing can occur by chance—that He is the first and the last, that He is Ruler over all.

Now mark! hitherto I have taken the words, "Thou rulest," in a general sense, as to God's universal and absolute government; but in the

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text, these words have a special, a particular meaning. "THOU rulest the raging of the sea."

This is the second point I wish to preach on, and this will suit my sailor crew here. The church may well be compared to persons at sea, shut up in a vessel, tossed about by many, many storms. Residing as we do here, near the sea, on the sea coast, we know something about this; you Hastings people know it; I have known, and so have some of you, "The Parade," as it is called there, washed, covered by the waves; not indeed in calm summer weather like this, when the sea is calm and still as a pond; but how is it in December? how when the tide swells, and the storm blows violently, and if we have seen it so on land, what must it be to those—to sailors out at sea and in a storm—the tossing up and down? "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." (Psa. cvii. 23—29.)

Is not this like the Christian, the poor sinner tried and tossed, and blown on by the storms without, and worse within? Lusts, temptations, trials in providence, the world, flesh and devil, enemies plotting against him, a vile and an evil heart of unbelief, pride, covetousness, wickedness. My hearers, whether I please, or whether I offend you, I must, and God enabling me, I will preach THE TRUTH to you. I am addressing my flock, I am also speaking to some here strange-faced to me, I am preaching to dying men—I am compelled to declare TRUTH before you; be not therefore angry with me.

What would you say to a lawyer if he advised you wrongly on points of law? or of a physician in case of sickness if he improperly prescribed? Bear with me then as a minister of the gospel. "Am I become your enemy because I tell you the TRUTH?"

Now, my point is this, "Thou rulest the raging of the sea." Are we, you and I out at sea? not at home? on a voyage? we shall not be at home, remember, till we get into port. Let me read you a passage which was much blessed to me; I shall not forget it: "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awoke him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark iv. 37—41.)

Observe, Christ was in the ship with them "asleep on a pillow"—the storm was terrifying—they feared—they awoke Him—their cry was, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" O, mark His love! They appealed not, nor cried in vain to Him; He arose—He rebuked the wind—He commanded the sea into perfect stillness—"Peace, be still!" O, mighty God, wonderful indeed THOU art!

"The wind ceased and there was a great calm." O how He watched over them, how He still guards His church; true, He was "asleep on the pillow;" as man He slept, as God He never slumbers; He rose up at that cry—"Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Often when a question is asked in the Bible, it is intended as a stronger way of asserting

a fact, as in Romans viii. 35, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" That is a question asked. The force of it is—NOTHING can ever separate from the love of Christ. So, here, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" declares (as in a question), that they (the people of God) never shall, never can perish. But now, as he ruled the raging sea (in the passage of Scripture I refer to in Mark iv.), as He commanded a calm, and a stillness of the waves, observe His touching and telling expostulation, "Why are ye so fearful?" Is not this a word in season to some of you? Again he asks, "How is it that ye have no faith?"

Paul declares to the Corinthian Church, "Without fightings, within fears." And you, my hearers, and I, know the reality of those words. We have experienced this at Winchelsea again and again. It is the fact, "fighting" without will never cease *here*; we must encounter the battle. I was reading in my own family to day, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." (Rom. xii. 18.) But with some men this is impossible. It has been said, that for instance, "a Protestant cannot be at peace with a Papist." "I came not to send peace but a sword." The church is compared to those engaged in war. "They all hold swords, expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night." The sentry that paces his appointed round at Windsor Castle, holds indeed his bayonet on guard; but he is not the soldier engaged in the active fighting battle-field. The sentry hears not the cannon's roar, neither drops under the sword-cut wound. But ask the soldier who is, or has been fighting—he can describe the attacks, and the fury of the enemy. And so it is with the church, "fightings without," "fears within." But listen to me.

"Why those fears, behold, 'tis Jesus,
Holds the helm and guides the ship!"

Hear His own word, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" It is Christ who said these words. I can imagine a countryman, a peasant cottager, for instance (if circumstances allowed it), astonished and confused if the Queen were to speak to him; and such a man would artlessly declare that it terrified him. So, see in the passage I am referring to, "And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (Mark iv. 41.) He had performed a miracle before them and they were astonished.

But the point before us is this, "The raging of the sea," when the sea is at its height. Is there no poor one now here who knows what I mean by this? out at sea and the sea raging. It is impossible (as Mr. Hart has well said in the preface to his hymn book) "to chalk out the path of any one child of God by that of another." But there is a point to which the whole election of grace must each and all be brought—and that is the raging of the sea—and the trials of the storm. You know that this is so. Some of you may now be in a calm, some under a swelling breeze, and others in the very fury and raging of the sea—annoyances of various kinds, numerous enemies, sins and temptations raging within you. And as I here "draw a bow at a venture," and preach the gospel, I proclaim the truth, that God rules the raging of the sea, and stills the rising waves. This is a blessed message, full of comfort if applied with power, to poor sea-tossed sinners. If you derive *now* no consolation as I am preaching, yet, the subject, and the text may be blest to you afterwards. We must know what it is to be at sea. And our heaviest afflictions, and most deeply-cutting trials, have been through grace and love, often made our greatest blessings. Predestination secures the church in everything. But it is one thing to profess the doctrine, it is another to know it—experimentally and practically—to

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live on it day by day—believing that God orders every and all events for the good of “His own elect,” and the display of His own everlasting glory.

And now I come to the other portion of the text, “When the waves thereof arise thou stillest them.”

“When I can read *my* title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I'll bid farewell to all my fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.

“Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurl'd,
Then I can smile at Satan's rage,
And face a frowning world.

“Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall;
May I but safely reach my home,
My God! my heaven! my all!

“There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest;
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast.”

No annoyances *then*—no sin—no sorrow *there*—safe at home *then*—sheltered in a loving Father's arms!

I feel the vastness of the work in which I am now engaged. I believe I am addressing some who know what it is to be at sea, tossed to and fro in the midst of many storms, fearing, trembling, crying out—what reality is this! how different is the state of the mere professor, the talker, such as get up a system from books, and from other people, from the trash periodicals of the day, such as have merely the dry form, but know nothing of the power. My hearers, I say to you now, that which I have said again and again, learn from the *one Book*, and look for a blessing to the *one Teacher*. “Thy word is TRUTH.” God teaches in the school of affliction, and manifests his mercy in the deep waters. We learn much from tribulation—the protecting hand of our covenant God and His preserving care is realized by storms and in tempestuous seas. The calm sea has its blessing of peace, and the gentle gale of wind has its purpose; but we learn most of the helplessness of self, and the omnipotence of God, when the waves beat high, and dash and roar, and when the ship is well nigh full. O yes, it is as Isaiah expresses it, “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” It is the storm and a raging sea, and rising waves, that make elect men and women flee for help to one “mighty to save.” Some of you when service is over, will, it may be, leave the church, and think no more and care no more for these things—the preaching may “go in at one ear and out at the other,”—but there are others here—stable souls—earnest seekers, who come and sit here for edification through the preached word. It is the sea, the often with you rough sea of sin, trial, temptation, family, worldly, providential troubles, which force you to seek for, and prize the refuge and the harbour. “Innumerable evils have compassed you about,”—and when the sea rages, you may tremble, the conflict is trying, and the battle may be severe; but when the fight and the exercise is hottest, the victory may be near. Just as at the famous battle of Waterloo, when England's brave and valiant Soldier-Duke seeing the moment come, called to his faithful guards, “Up guards and at them!”—and so won the day, and gained the honours of his conquering sword. So it is, so it has been, so it ever will be, in another scene of conflict, of trial, and of exercise, when the enemy is well nigh overwhelming, and the soul is harrassed with trembling and despair, when the sea rages, and the tempest howls—then “man's extremity is God's opportunity,” and the eye of faith directed Christwards, sees in Him, and in His precious blood, a refuge from all storms—the STILLER of the rising waves. Listen to me again—

“The billows swell, the winds are high,
Clouds overcast my wintry sky;
Out of the depths to THEE I call,
My fears are great, my strength is small.

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"O Lord, the pilot's part perform,
And guard and guide me through the storm;
Defend me from each threatening ill,
Control the waves, say, 'Peace, be still.'"

I know that experimentally in my own soul. God has mercifully hushed many a boisterous, well nigh overwhelming wave for me, with His own command, "Peace, be still;" and the enemy has been still—and the sea has ceased its roaring. O the waves of trouble—O the billows of soul-exercise! The enemy has come in like a flood, but the standard raised by the Spirit has conquered and subdued him!

That "standard" has been defined to be the cross of Christ, and the standard bearers to be faithful ministers of the gospel! O that I may be to-day made an instrument in comforting some tempest-tossed soul by proclaiming faithfully and fully before you that there is "ONE mighty to save," Omnipotent to rule and still the raging sea, and every storm. "Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise thou stillest them." There are many and bitter trials both in providence and grace—spiritual exercises cut the deepest. I was reading in my study to-day, with some special comfort, Psalm lxxix. 11—13: "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die; and render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord. So we thy people, and sheep of thy pasture, will give thee thanks for ever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations." "So we THY people (that was so sweet to me!) and sheep of thy pasture," &c. In Psalm xlii. 1, 2, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" "As the hart *panteth*!" that panting state—I was lately told by a hearer of mine, in the City of London, of a sweet idea as preached by a minister on that passage:—that the panting of the hart was in consequence of its having been hunted and oppressed;—that it did not always pant—that panting was because of having been pursued—so the needy sinner pants *for* and *after* the living God as all his salvation and all his desire. "Woe to them at ease in Zion."

"But sin hangs heavy on my soul."

It is the hunted sinner, the oppressed, heavy-burdened sinner—when temptation, guilt, and sin harrass and pursue him—he is the sinner that pants after Christ, and cries for mercy to the living God! It is like the hunting scene!—the dogs, and the full field of sportsmen, and all ranged together in pursuit of the poor timid hart! and, as pursued, that hart fleeing away for safety, runs to the brook for to quench its thirst with the water—so, so the poor exercised believer flees from Satan, world, and sin, and self, and panting after the water-brook of life and salvation, seeks after Jesus as the living God! and longs to appear before Him as his ALL. "Love not the world, neither the things in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." O, when the soul is cast down—when enemies pursue—when the sea rages and billows roar—then,

"He, like a beacon on a hill,
Erects His bloody cross."

But no sea rages so keenly as spiritual trial—when the anguish is felt within—when the spirit is wounded, and in deep agony—

"I asked the Lord that I might grow In faith, and love, and every grace,	Might more of His salvation know, And seek more earnestly His face."
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Now that was an earnest prayer! instead, however, of answering it as Newton asked, God in mercy gave him just the contrary. Mark his own testimony—

AND STILLER OF THE STORM.

"Instead of this He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart,

And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part."

My hearers, in that hymn is reality! The tongue cannot express what that reality is. It must be felt—experienced—known!

When the Lord takes a man King's prisoner—arrests him in his natural course—stops him—as in the case of Saul of Tarsus on his Damascus journey! and "fallen to the earth" he hears THE voice—when He who separates from a mother's womb, calls by grace, and gives the birth that cometh from above—and the "narrow way" is entered on—*then* trials, temptations, crosses, afflictions and distress of soul are known—and these end not, as I said to my child this morning, till we are deposited in the grave. Hence, mark the blessedness of the text, "Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise thou stillest them." This soothes us in the midst of all—God rules and reigns! His watchful eye is never closed—His loving-kindness never changes! "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." With *that* love felt and known—seas may rage—enemies surround—devils may annoy—but "the everlasting arms are underneath," and the poor tempest-tossed sinner sees and knows that his safety and protection is in the mercy and grace of HIM who rules not only raging seas and storms, but also reigns triumphant as the Church's KING and everlasting LORD. This is the gospel—there is no other!

Look at this psalm when the service is over—and in going through its fifty-two verses mark well the ninth verse—may you never forget it. "Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise thou stillest them." What poetry there is in the very words!

Another thought occurs to me in reference to my text—How, in the highest sense, have the waves been stilled—How has God's wrath been pacified—How has the church been redeemed and saved! O, what a doctrine here bursts forth! Jesus Christ has suffered in her stead—He has borne the wrath of God against sin—He has satisfied all the claims and demands of law and justice, and atoned by His own death and precious blood for all the sins of his people. Till we are brought to see this with the eye of faith through (if I may so speak) the telescope of all-enabling grace, we know *nothing*. Salvation is by blood and love—by GRACE alone—works cannot save! "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. ii. 8, 9.) I know how I am attacked by those who oppose me—how I am reviled and belied by men and women who know not the truth—how the mere professor takes offence, and the Arminians roar. I know well how the preaching—the faithful and uncompromising preaching of the free grace gospel, in this dear old church, has stirred up the carnal enmity of mere formalists and carnal worldlings—and despite this (all glory be to God) I know *also* the way in which He has here stood by His servant, and blest to many the proclamation of free grace salvation through the finished work of His beloved Son! A yea and nay gospel is no gospel at all—grace saves—and grace only. The moral man—the respectable man must be, and only can be, saved by the blood of Christ! good works must be kept in their proper station—mind that! No man would insist on these more than I would, as the fruits of the Spirit—mind that—"fruits of the Spirit!" Those that speak of a conditional salvation, and bring in their "ifs" and "buts" and "ands," know not the word, nor the way of Jehovah's FREE salvation. Listen to this discriminating Scripture, "And if by grace, then no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if of works then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work. What then! Israel hath not obtained that which

THE RULER OF THE SEA AND STILLER OF THE STORM.

he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber—eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear) unto this day.” They who are not taught of God mingle truth and error—they know not what they talk about—but there is a little flock, a few here, a few there, blessed of God—yea, a little flock in Winchelsea church^{now}, as well as others scattered over the country—and you know, and they know, that whilst we look only to Christ and His blood and love for salvation, we desire to be “zealous of good works,” but in no way to depend upon them—*sin* is our burden, *Christ* is our hope, our all and in all.

I maintain then the doctrines of *Free Grace Salvation*, I preach them as a minister of the gospel, I declare them as an attached servant in the church of England. I proclaim salvation to be *of and by grace* alone, “not of works.” May my unmistakeable preaching be blessed—may the poor in spirit, and the broken in heart be comforted in the midst of many storms, and may the dead in sin be quickened into life by that grace which I declare. The judgment is at hand. The natural man cannot understand the truth, it is foolishness to him.

No man that has ever heard me preach the gospel here at home, or in the City of London (though many may, and do grossly misrepresent me), can fail of knowing what I have declared; there can be no mistake about it, and therefore carnal and professing men are angry, and their malice is displayed, but “the day will declare it.” May the Ruler of the sea, and the Stiller of every storm, keep me and make me faithful unto death, and may you and I who have been made to believe in Jesus, be looking to and at Him, as “one mighty to save.” That touching cry in our Litany—“By thine agony and bloody sweat, by thy cross and passion, by thy precious death and burial, by thy glorious resurrection and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost,” is indeed our only, but our all-sufficient deliverance. May he be our Redeemer. “I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him.” (Ezek. xxi. 27.) May we feel in His hands, be in ourselves nothing, have nothing, do nothing, and may we realize that we have all in him. Christ declared, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” “Nothing can be added to it—nothing taken from it.” And He will overturn, overturn, overturn all and everything in us that is contrary to his will and truth.

But I must stop, it is quite impossible to preach by time. To the church assembled here, how blessed is the word in the text, “Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.” To the carnal hearers, I would say—may the gospel be applied with power, and you be arrested in your course of worldliness, and mere profession or form. Some of you, though carnal and dead in sin now, may, nevertheless, be children of God in His own “eternal purpose.” This encourages me in declaring the TRUTH to you—yea, in preaching the “gospel to every creature.” Who can tell?

“Determined to save he watch’d o’er my path,
When Satan’s blind slave I sported with death.”

O! who can tell, indeed?

The Lord bless these things with power to you, make them an everlasting blessing, and bless His word; may He keep it in the hearts of His own people, and by grace make it a real comfort to you when the storm comes.

I feel I have scarcely said a word! there is such a fulness in the text.—Listen! “Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise Thou stillest them.”

May God command the blessing, for JESUS CHRIST’S sake. Amen.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

HIS NAME—WONDERFUL!

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 19, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"His name shall be called Wonderful."—Isaiah ix, 6.

ONE evening last week I stood by the sea-shore when the storm was raging. The voice of the Lord was upon the waters; and who was I that I should tarry within doors, when my Master's voice was heard sounding along the water? I rose and stood to behold the flash of his lightnings, and listen to the glory of his thunders. The sea and the thunders were contesting with one another; the sea with infinite clamour striving to hush the deep-throated thunder, so that his voice should not be heard; yet over and above the roar of the billows might be heard that voice of God, as he spake with flames of fire, and divided the way for the waters. It was a dark night, and the sky was covered with thick clouds, and scarce a star could be seen through the rifts of the tempest; but at one particular time, I noticed far away on the horizon, as if miles across the water, a bright shining, like gold. It was the moon hidden behind the clouds, so that she could not shine upon us; but she was able to send her rays down upon the waters, far away, where no cloud happened to intervene. I thought as I read this chapter last evening, that the prophet seemed to have stood in a like position, when he wrote the words of my text. All round about him were clouds of darkness; he heard prophetic thunders roaring, and he saw flashes of the lightnings of divine vengeance; clouds and darkness, for many a league, were scattered through history; but he saw far away a bright spot—one place where the clear shining came down from heaven. And he sat down, and he penned these words: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined;" and though he looked through whole leagues of space, where he saw the battle of the warrior "with confused noise and garments rolled in blood," yet he fixed his eye upon one bright spot in futurity, and he declared, that there he saw hope of peace, prosperity and blessedness; for said he, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful."

My dear friends, we live to-day upon the verge of that bright spot. The world has been passing through these clouds of darkness, and the light is gleaming on us now, like the glintings of the first rays of morning. We are coming to a brighter day, and "at evening time it shall be light." The clouds and darkness shall be rolled up as a mantle that God needs no longer, and he shall appear in his

glory, and his people shall rejoice with him. But you must mark, that all the brightness was the result of this child born, this son given, whose name is called Wonderful; and if we can discern any brightness in our own hearts, or in the world's history, it can come from nowhere else, than from the one who is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God."

The person spoken of in our text, is undoubtedly the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a child born, with reference to his human nature; he is born of the virgin, a child. But he is a son given, with reference to his divine nature, being given as well as born. Of course, the Godhead could not be born of woman. That was from everlasting, and is to everlasting. As a child he was born; as a son he was given. "The government is upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful." Beloved, there are a thousand things in this world, that are called by names that do not belong to them; but in entering upon my text, I must announce at the very opening, that Christ is called Wonderful, because he is so. God the Father never gave his Son a name which he did not deserve. There is no panegyric here, no flattery. It is just the simple name that he deserves, they that know him best will say that the word doth not overstrain his merits, but rather falleth infinitely short of his glorious deserving. His name is called Wonderful. And mark, it does not merely say, that God has given him the name of Wonderful—though that is implied; but "his name shall be called" so. It shall be; it is at this time called Wonderful by all his believing people, and it shall be. As long as the moon endureth, there shall be found men, and angels, and glorified spirits, who shall always call him by his right name. "His name shall be called Wonderful."

I find that this name may bear two or three interpretations. The word is sometimes in Scripture translated "marvellous." Jesus Christ may be called marvellous; and a learned German interpreter says, that without doubt, the meaning of miraculous is also wrapt up in it. Christ is the marvel of marvels, the miracle of miracles. "His name shall be called *Miraculous*," for he is more than a man, he is God's highest miracle. "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." It may also mean separated, or distinguished. And Jesus Christ may well be called this; for as Saul was distinguished from all men, being head and shoulders taller than they, so is Christ distinguished above all men; he is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and in his character, and in his acts, he is infinitely separated from all comparison with any of the sons of men. "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips." He is "the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely." "His name shall be called the *Separated One*," the distinguished one, the noble one, set apart from the common race of mankind.

We shall, however, this morning, keep to the old version, and simply read it thus, "His name shall be called Wonderful." And first I shall notice that Jesus Christ deserveth to be called Wonderful for *what he was in the past*; secondly, that he is called Wonderful by all his people for *what he is in the present*; and in the third place, that he *shall* be called Wonderful, for *what he shall be in the future*.

I. First, Christ shall be called Wonderful for **WHAT HE WAS IN THE PAST**. Gather up your thoughts, my brethren, for a moment, and centre them all on Christ, and you will soon see how wonderful he is. Consider his eternal existence, "begotten of his Father from before all worlds," being of the same substance with his Father: begotten, not made, co-equal, co-eternal, in every attribute, "very God of very God." For a moment remember that he who became an infant of a span long, was no less than the King of ages, the everlasting Father, who was from eternity, and is to be to all eternity. The divine nature of Christ is indeed wonderful. Just think for a moment, how much interest clusters round the life of an old man. Those of us who are but as children in years, look up to him with

wonder and astonishment, as he tells us the varied stories of the experience through which he has passed; but what is the life of an aged man—how brief it appears when compared with the life of the tree that shelters him. It existed long before that old man's father crept a helpless infant into the world. How many storms have swept over its brow! how many kings have come and gone! how many empires have risen and fallen since that old oak was slumbering in its acorn cradle! But what is the life of the tree compared with the soil on which it grows? What a wonderful story that soil might tell! What changes it has passed through in all the eras of time that have elapsed since "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." There is a wonderful story connected with every atom of black mould which furnishes the nourishment of the oak. But what is the history of that soil compared with the marvellous history of the rock on which it rests—the cliff on which it lifts its head. Oh! what stories might it tell, what records lie hidden in its bowels. Perhaps it could tell the story of the time when "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the earth." Perhaps it might speak and tell us of those days when the morning and the evening were the first day, and the morning and the evening were the second day, and could explain to us the mysteries of how God made this marvellous piece of miracle,—the world. But what is the history of the cliff, compared with that of the sea that rolls at its base—that deep blue ocean, over which a thousand navies have swept, without leaving a furrow upon its brow! But what is the history of the sea, compared with the history of the heavens that are stretched like a curtain over that vast basin! What a history is that of the hosts of heaven—of the everlasting marches of the sun, moon, and stars! Who can tell their generation, or who can write their biography? But what is the history of the heavens, compared with the history of the angels? They could tell you of the day when they saw this world wrapped in swaddling bands of mist—when, like a new-born infant, the last of God's offspring, it came forth from him, and the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy. But what is the history of the angels that excel in strength, compared with the history of the Lord Jesus Christ? The angel is but of yesterday, and he knoweth nothing; Christ, the Eternal One, chargeth even his angels with folly, and looks upon them as his ministering spirits, that come and go at his good pleasure. Oh, Christians, gather with reverence and mysterious awe around the throne of him who is your great Redeemer; for "his name is called Wonderful," since he has existed before all things, and "by him all things were made; and without him was not anything made that was made."

Consider, again, the incarnation of Christ, and you will rightly say, that his name deserveth to be called "Wonderful." Oh! what is that I see? Oh! world of wonders, what is that I see? The Eternal of ages, whose hair is white like wool, as white as snow, becomes an infant. Can it be? Ye angels, are ye not astonished? He becomes an infant, hangs at a virgin's breast, draws his nourishment from the breast of woman. Oh wonder of wonders! Manger of Bethlehem, thence hast miracles poured into thee. This is a sight that surpasses all others. Talk ye of the sun, moon, and stars; consider ye the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars that he hath ordained; but all the wonders of the universe shrink into nothing, when we come to the mystery of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a marvellous thing when Joshua bade the sun to stand still, but more marvellous when God seemed to stand still, and no longer to move forward, but rather, like the sun upon the dial of Ahaz, did go back ten degrees, and veil his splendour in a cloud. There have been sights matchless and wonderful, at which we might look for years, and yet turn away and say, "I cannot understand this; here is a deep into which I dare not dive; my thoughts are

HIS NAME—WONDERFUL!

drowned; this is a steep without a summit; I cannot climb it; it is high, I cannot attain it!" But all these things are as nothing, compared with the incarnation of the Son of God. I do believe that the very angels have never wondered but once and that has been incessantly ever since they first beheld it. They never cease to tell the astonishing story, and to tell it with increasing astonishment too, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born of the Virgin Mary, and became a man. Is he not rightly called Wonderful? Infinite, and an infant—eternal, and yet born of a woman—Almighty, and yet hanging on a woman's breast—supporting the universe, and yet needing to be carried in a mother's arms—king of angels, and yet the reputed son of Joseph—heir of all things, and yet the carpenter's despised son. Wonderful art thou, O Jesus, and that shall be thy name for ever.

But trace the Saviour's course, and all the way he is wonderful. Is it not marvellous that he submitted to the taunts and jeers of his enemies—that for a long life he should allow the bulls of Bashan to gird him round, and the dogs to encompass him? Is it not surprising that he should have bridled in his anger, when blasphemy was uttered against his sacred person? Had you or I been possessed of his matchless might, we should have dashed our enemies down the brow of the hill, if they had sought to cast us there; we should never have submitted to shame and spitting; no, we would have looked upon them, and with one fierce look of wrath, have dashed their spirits into eternal torment. But he hears it all—keeps in his noble spirit—the lion of the tribe of Judah, but bearing still the lamb-like character of

"The humble man before his foes,
A weary man, and full of woes."

I do believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the king of heaven, and yet he was a poor, despised, persecuted, slandered man; but while I believe it I never can understand it. I bless him for it; I love him for it; I desire to praise his name while immortality endures for his infinite condescension in thus suffering for me; but to understand it, I can never pretend. His name must all his life long be called Wonderful.

But see him die. Come O my brothers, ye children of God, and gather round the cross. See your Master. There he hangs. Can you understand this riddle: God was manifest in the flesh, and crucified of men? My Master, I cannot understand how thou couldst stoop thine awful head to such a death as this—how thou couldst take from thy brow the coronet of stars which from old eternity had shone resplendent there; but how thou shouldst permit the thorn-crown to gird thy temples astonishes me far more. That thou shouldst cast away the mantle of thy glory, the azure of thine everlasting empire, I cannot comprehend; but how thou shouldst have become veiled in the ignominious purple for awhile, and then be bowed to by impious men, who mocked thee as a pretended king, and how thou shouldst be stripped naked to thy shame, without a single covering, this is still more incomprehensible. Truly thy name is Wonderful. Oh thy love to me is wonderful, passing the love of woman. Was ever grief like thine? Was ever love like thine, that could open the flood gates of such grief. Thy grief is like a river; but was there ever spring that poured out such a torrent? Was ever love so mighty as to become the fount from which such an ocean of grief could come rolling down? Here is matchless love—matchless love to make him suffer, matchless power to enable him to endure all the weight of his Father's wrath. Here is matchless justice, that he himself should acquiesce in his Father's will, and not allow men to be saved without his own sufferings; and here is matchless mercy to the chief of sinners, that Christ should suffer even for them. "His name shall be called Wonderful."

But he died. He died! See Salem's daughters weep around. Joseph of Arimathea takes up the lifeless body after it has been taken down from the cross. They bear it away to the sepulchre. It is put in a garden. Do you call him Wonderful now?

"Is this the Saviour long foretold
To usher in the age of gold?"

And is he dead? Lift his hands! They drop motionless by his side. His foot exhibits still the nail-print; but there is no mark of life. "Aha," cries the Jew, "is this the Messiah? He is dead; he shall see corruption in a little space of time. Oh! watchman, keep good ward lest his disciples steal his body. His body can

never come forth, unless they do steal it; for he is dead. Is this the Wonderful, the Counsellor?" But God did not leave his soul in Hades, nor did he suffer his body—"his holy one"—to see corruption? Yes, he is wonderful, even in his death. That clay-cold corpse is wonderful. Perhaps this is the greatest wonder of all, that he who is "Death of death and hell's destruction" should for awhile endure the bonds of death. But here is the wonder. He could not be holden of those bonds. Those chains, which have held ten thousand of the sons and daughters of Adam, and which have never been broken yet by any man of human mould, save by a miracle, were but to him as green withes. Death bound our Samson fast, and said, "I have him now; I have taken away the locks of his strength; his glory is departed, and now he is mine; but the hands that kept the human race in chains were nothing to the Saviour; the third day he burst them, and he rose again from the dead, from henceforth to die no more. Oh! thou risen Saviour—thou who couldst not see corruption—thou art wonderful in thy resurrection. And thou art wonderful too in thine ascension—as I see thee leading captivity captive and receiving gifts for men. "His name shall be called Wonderful.

Pause here one moment, and let us think—Christ is surpassingly wonderful. The little story I have told you just now—not little in itself, but little as I have told it—has in it something surpassingly wonderful. All the wonders that you ever saw are nothing compared with this. As we have passed through various countries we have seen a wonder, and some older traveller than ourselves has said, "Yes, this is wonderful to you, but I could show you something that utterly eclipses that." Though we have seen some splendid landscapes, with glorious hills, and we have climbed up where the eagle seemed to knit the mountain and the sky together in his flight, and we have stood and looked down, and said, "How wonderful!" Saith he, "I have seen fairer lands than these, and wider and richer prospects far." But when we speak of Christ, none can say they ever saw a greater wonder than he is. You have come now to the very summit of everything that may be wondered at. There are no mysteries equal to this mystery; there is no surprise equal to this surprise; there is no astonishment, no admiration that should equal the astonishment and admiration that we feel when we behold Christ in the glories of the past. He surpasses everything.

And yet again. Wonder is a short-lived emotion; you know, it is proverbial that a wonder grows grey-headed in nine days. The longest period that a wonder is found to last is about that time. It is such a short-lived thing. But Christ is, and ever shall be wonderful. You may think of him through three-score years and ten, but you shall wonder at him more at the end than at the beginning. Abraham might wonder at him, when he saw his day in the distant future; but I do not think that even Abraham himself could wonder at Christ so much as the very least in the kingdom of heaven of to-day wonders at him, seeing that we know more than Abraham, and therefore wonder more. Think again for one moment, and you will say of Christ that he deserves to be called Wonderful, not only because he is always wonderful, and because he is surpassingly wonderful, but also because he is altogether wonderful. There have been some great feats of skill in the arts and sciences; for instance, if we take a common wonder of the day, the telegraph—how much there is about that which is wonderful! But there are a great many things in the telegraph that we can understand. Though there are many mysteries in it, still there are parts of it that are like keys to the mysteries, so that if we cannot solve the riddle wholly, yet it is disrobed of some of the low garments of its mystery. But now if you look at Christ anyhow, anywhere, anyway, he is all mystery; he is altogether wonderful, always to be looked at and always to be admired.

And again, he is universally wondered at. They tell us that the religion of Christ is very good for old women. I was once complimented by a person, who told me he believed my preaching would be extremely suitable for blacks—for negroes. He did not intend it as a compliment, but I replied, "Well sir, if it is suitable for blacks I should think it would be very suitable for whites; for there is only a little difference of skin, and I do not preach to people's skins, but to their hearts." Now, of Christ we can say that he is universally a wonder, the strongest intellects have wondered at him. Our Lockes and our Newtons have felt themselves to be as little children when they have come to the foot of the cross. The wonder has not been confined to ladies, to children, to old women and dying men; the highest intellects, and the loftiest minds have all wondered at Christ. I am sure it is a difficult task to make some people wonder. Hard thinkers and close mathematicians are not easily.

brought to wonder; but such men have covered their faces with their hands and cast themselves in the dust, and confessed that they have been lost in wonder and amazement. Well then may Christ be called Wonderful.

II. "His name shall be called Wonderful." He is wonderful for WHAT HE IS IN THE PRESENT. And here I will not diverge, but will just appeal to you personally. Is he wonderful to you? Let me tell the story of my own wonderment at Christ, and in telling it, I shall be telling the experience of all God's children. There was a time when I wondered not at Christ. I heard of his beauties, but I had never seen them; I heard of his power, but it was nought to me; it was but news of something done in a far country—I had no connection with it, and therefore I observed it not. But once upon a time, there came one to my house of a black and terrible aspect. He smote the door; I tried to bolt it—to hold it fast. He smote again and again, till at last he entered, and with a rough voice he summoned me before him; and he said, "I have a message from God for thee; thou art condemned on account of thy sins." I looked at him with astonishment; I asked him his name. He said, "My name is the Law;" and I fell at his feet as one that was dead. "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." As I lay there, he smote me. He smote me till every rib seemed as if it must break, and the bowels be poured forth. My heart was melted like wax within me; I seemed to be stretched upon a rack—to be pinched with hot irons—to be beaten with whips of burning wire. A misery extreme dwelt and reigned in my heart. I dared not lift up mine eyes, but I thought within myself, "There may be hope, there may be mercy for me. Perhaps the God whom I have offended may accept my tears and my promises of amendment, and I may live." But when that thought crossed me, heavier were the blows and more poignant my sufferings than before, till hope entirely failed me, and I had nought wherein to trust. Darkness black and dense gathered round me; I heard a voice as it were, of rushing to and fro, and of wailing and gnashing of teeth. I said within my soul, "I am cast out from his sight, I am utterly abhorred of God, he hath trampled me in the mire of the streets in his anger." And there came one by, of sorrowful but of loving aspect, and he stooped over me, and he said, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." I arose in astonishment, and he took me, and he led me to a place where stood a cross, and he seemed to vanish from my sight. But he appeared again hanging there. I looked upon him as he bled upon that tree. His eyes darted a glance of love unutterable into my spirit, and in a moment, looking at him, the bruises that my soul had suffered were healed; the gaping wounds were cured; the broken bones rejoiced; the rags that had covered me were all removed; my spirit was white as the spotless snows of the far-off north; I had melody within my spirit, for I was saved, washed, cleansed, forgiven, through him that did hang upon the tree. Oh, how I wondered that I should be pardoned! It was not the pardon that I wondered at so much; the wonder was that it should come to me. I wondered that he should be able to pardon such sins as mine, such crimes, so numerous and so black, and that after such an accusing conscience he should have power to still every wave within my spirit, and make my soul like the surface of a river, undisturbed, quiet, and at ease. His name then to my spirit was Wonderful. But, brethren and sisters, if you have felt this, you can say you thought him wonderful then—if you are feeling it, a sense of adoring wonder enraptures your heart even now.

And has he not been wonderful to you since that auspicious hour, when first you heard Mercy's voice spoken to you? How often have you been in sadness, sickness, and sorrow! But your pain has been light, for Jesus Christ has been with you on your sick-beds; your care has been no care at all, for you have been able to cast your burden upon him. The trial which threatened to crush you, rather lifted you up to heaven, and you have said "How wonderful that Jesus Christ's name should give me such comfort, such joy, such peace, such confidence." Various things bring to my recollection a period now removed by the space of nearly two years. Never shall we forget, beloved, the judgments of the Lord, when by terrible things in righteousness he answered our prayer that he would give us success in this house. We cannot forget how the people were scattered—how some of the sheep were slain, and the shepherd himself was smitten. I may not have told in your hearing the story of my own woe. Perhaps never soul went so near the burning furnace of insanity, and yet came away unharmed. I have walked by that fire until these locks seemed to be crisp with the heat thereof. My brain was racked,

I dared not look up to God, and prayer that was once my solace, was the cause of my affright and terror, if I attempted it. I shall never forget the time when I first became restored to myself. It was in the garden of a friend. I was walking solitary and alone, musing upon my misery, much cheered as that was by the kindness of my loving friend, yet far too heavy for my soul to bear, when on a sudden the name of Jesus flashed through my mind. The person of Christ seemed visible to me. I stood still. The burning lava of my soul was cooled. My agonies were hushed. I bowed myself there, and the garden that had seemed a Gethsemane became to me a Paradise. And then it seemed so strange to me, that nought should have brought me back but that name of Jesus. I thought indeed at that time that I should love him better all the days of my life. But there were two things I wondered at. I wondered that he should be so good to me, and I wondered more that I should have been so ungrateful to him. But his name has been from that time "Wonderful" to me, and I must record what he has done for my soul.

And now, brothers and sisters, you shall all find, every day of your life, whatever your trials and troubles, that he shall always be made the more wonderful by them. He sends your troubles to be like a black foil, to make the diamond of his name shine the brighter. You would never know the wonders of God if it were not that you find them out in the furnace. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep;" and we shall never see the wonders of God except in that deep; we must go into the deeps before we know how wonderful his power and his might to save.

I must not leave this point without one more remark. There have been times when you and I have said of Christ, "His name is wonderful indeed, for we have been by it transported entirely above the world, and carried upward to the very gates of heaven itself." I pity you, beloved, if you do not understand the rhapsody I am about to use. There are moments when the Christian feels the charms of earth all broken, and his wings are loosed, and he begins to fly; and up he soars, till he forgets earth's sorrows and leaves them far behind; and up he goes, till he forgets earth's joys, and leaves them like the mountain tops far below, as when the eagle flies to meet the sun; and up, up, up he goes, with his Saviour full before him almost in vision beatific. His heart is full of Christ; his soul beholds his Saviour, and the cloud that darkened his view of the Saviour's face seems to be dispersed. At such a time the Christian can sympathise with Paul. He says, "Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell—God knoweth!" but I am, as it were, "caught up to the third heaven." And how is this rapture produced? By the music of flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of instruments? No. How then? By riches? By fame? By wealth? Ah, no. By a strong mind? By a lively disposition? No. By the name of Jesus. That one name is all sufficient to lead the Christian into heights of transport that verge upon the region where the angels fly in cloudless day.

III. I have no more time to stay upon this point, although the text is infinite, and one might preach upon it for ever. I have only to notice that his name shall be called Wonderful in the future.

The day is come, the day of wrath, the day of fire. The ages are ended; the last century, like the last pillar of a dilapidated temple, has crumbled to its fall. The clock of time is verging to its last hour. It is on the stroke. The time is come when the things that are made must disappear. Lo, I see earth's bowels moving. A thousand hillocks give up the slumbering dead. The battle fields are clothed no more with the rich harvests that have been manured with blood; but a new harvest has sprung up. The fields are thick with men. The sea itself becomes a prolific mother, and though she hath swallowed men alive, she gives them up again, and they stand before God, an exceeding great army. Sinners! ye have risen from your tombs; the pillars of heaven are reeling; the sky is moving to and fro; the sun, the eye of this great world, is rolling like a maniac's, and glaring with dismay. The moon that long has cheered the night now makes the darkness terrible, for she is turned into a clot of blood. Portents, and signs, and wonders past imagination, make the heavens shake, and make men's hearts quail within them. Suddenly upon a cloud there comes one like unto the Son of Man. Sinners! picture your astonishment and your wonder when you see him. Where art thou, Voltaire? Thou saidst, "I will crush the wretch." Come and crush him now! "Nay," saith Voltaire, "he is not the man I thought he was." Oh how will he wonder when he finds out what Christ is! Now, Judas, come and give

him a traitor's kiss! "Ah! nay," says he, "I knew not what I kissed: I thought I kissed only the son of Mary, but lo! he is the everlasting God." Now, ye kings and princes, that stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from us!" Come now, take counsel once more; rebel against him now! Oh! can ye picture the astonishment, the wonder, the dismay, when careless, godless infidels and Socinians find out what Christ is? "Oh!" they will say, "this is wonderful; I thought not he was such as this;" while Christ shall say to them, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such as yourselves; but I am no such thing; I am come in all my Father's glory to judge the quick and dead."

Pharaoh led his hosts into the midst of the Red Sea. The path was dry and shingly, and on either shore stood like a wall of alabaster the clear white water, stiff as with the breath of frost, consolidated into marble. There it stood. Can ye guess the astonishment and dismay of the hosts of Pharaoh, when they saw those walls of water about to close upon them? "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!" Such will be your astonishment, when Christ, whom ye have despised to-day—Christ, whom ye would not have to be your Saviour—Christ, whose Bible ye left unread, whose Sabbath ye despised—Christ, whose gospel ye rejected, shall come in the glory of his Father, and all his holy angels with him. Ay, then indeed will ye "behold, and wonder, and perish," and you shall say, "His name is Wonderful."

But perhaps, the most wonderful part of the day of judgment is this, do you see all the horrors yonder—the black darkness, the horrid night, the clashing comet, the pale stars, sickly and wan, falling like figs from the fig tree? Do you hear the cry, "Rocks, hide us, mountains, on us fall?" "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise;" but there never was a battle like this. This is with fire and smoke indeed. But do ye see yonder? All is peaceful, all serene and quiet. The myriads of the redeemed, are they shrieking, crying, wailing? No; see them! They are gathering—gathering round the throne. That very throne that seems to scatter, as with a hundred hands, death and destruction on the wicked, becomes the sun of light and happiness to all believers. Do you see them coming, robed in white, with their bright wings? while gathering round him they veil their faces. Do ye hear them cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, for thou wast slain, and thou hast risen from the dead; worthy art thou to live and reign, when death itself is dead?" Do ye hear them? It is all song, and no shriek. Do ye see them? It is all joy, and no terror. His name to them is Wonderful; but it is the wonder of admiration, the wonder of ecstasy, the wonder of affection, and not the wonder of horror and dismay. Saints of the Lord! ye *shall* know the wonders of his name, when ye shall see him as he is, and shall be like him in the day of his appearing. Oh! my enraptured spirit, thou shalt bear thy part in thy Redeemer's triumph, unworthy though thou art, the chief of sinners, and less than the least of saints. Thine eye shall see him and not another; "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, though worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Oh! make yourselves ready, ye virgins! Behold the bridegroom cometh. Arise and trim your lamps, and go ye out to meet him. He comes—he comes—he comes; and when he comes, you shall well say of him as you meet him with joy, "Thy name is called Wonderful. All hail! all hail! all hail!"

The Preacher.

No. LIII.

DOING GOD'S WILL, THE GUIDE TO DISCOVERING IT.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, SEPTEMBER 19, 1858,

BY THE REV. HENRY MELVILL, B.D.,

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IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, LONDON.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."—John vii. 17.

"If any man will do his will"—rather, in the original, if any man be willing to do his will. A readiness to perform God's will, supposing it ascertained, is given by our Blessed Saviour as the qualification which will ensure discovery; here is a most interesting field of Christian meditation. Generally, when we speak of the evidences of Christianity, we refer to the proofs which are only to be discovered by the studious, or appreciated by the educated. What, then, are the poor and the uneducated to do? Have they no sufficient reason for receiving the Bible as God's word, none at least beyond the fact that it has been long so received by the church of which they are members, or in the country of which they are natives? This, indeed, would be to place the faith of the common people on a most precarious foundation, rather on no foundation at all, and we know from abundant experience that this is very far from the truth; we know that whatever have been the sources whence our cottagers and our mechanics fetch their weapons and their strength, they have been just as well able to withstand scepticism as the wise and prudent. In fact, blessed be God, however shrewdly it may adapt itself to the circumstances of the lower orders, it has not won more triumphs in the hovels of our peasants than in the schools of our philosophers; and this shows that, although the poor may know nothing of the argument from analogy or the proof from history, some evidence there must be which lies quite within their reach, and our text furnishes a satisfactory account of the matter, by declaring that a readiness to do the will of God shall be followed by a discovery of the origin of the doctrine. It sets before us a method of demonstration which may be tried by the ignorant as well as by the learned, and, which, forasmuch as it must be worked out by the heart rather than by the head, is not more at the disposal of the most finished scholar than the most illiterate mechanic.

Why, in the first place, should the being ready to perform God's will ensure the ascertaining whether a doctrine be from God? This is not difficult to answer.

Observe, first of all, that this readiness marks honesty of character and freedom from those prejudices and prepossessions which are sure fatally to impede a search after truth. A man, when he sets himself to investigate a doctrine may see that if established, it will entail upon him duties which he has no wish to perform, and what chance is there of his deciding that the doctrine is true when he enters on the inquiry with an equal desire of proving it false? The understanding biased by the inclination will be quite unable to sit in calm and deliberate judgment on the evidences brought to its tribunal; its very process will be hindered by the interference of affections, clamorous for a verdict in their favour, and the decision which the will pronounced before the investigation commenced is almost sure to be ratified when the investigation concludes. If, in enumerating the works of the flesh—St. Paul mentions, as he does, heresies, as well as murders and drunkenness, it may be that infidelity should be referred to the lusts of the carnal, rather than to the decisions of the intellectual part of man. I have no wish to deny that many an infidel has brought a vast amount of intellect and industry to bear on the examination of the evidences of Christianity. I have no wish to confound all scepticism with that of which modern times have been prolific in specimens—the scepticism of young men who scarce ever opened a Bible, who are profoundly ignorant of the nature of its credentials, and who, having furnished themselves with a few second hand objections, and raked together a few antiquated sophistries, consider themselves qualified to disprove what has defied the assaults of eighteen centuries, and count it a fine thing to ridicule what has drawn homage from the learning, and genius, and philosophy of ages. I take no pains to account for such scepticism as this, we will hardly dignify it with the name of infidelity, it is ignorance, ignorance exposing itself through the desire of being notorious. A sceptic is a rarer thing than a believer, and therefore he who craves fame, and is not careful of its quality, may easily be a disciple of Deism rather than of Christ. But there is a better scepticism than this, if it may be allowed to speak of better where all are so bad; there is a scepticism which has at least been preceded by inquiry, and which is therefore more dignified than that meanest of all determinations, the meanest both intellectually and morally, the taking the dust which another has collected and scattering it over the objects of a people's veneration. We will admit that there are men who have investigated the evidences of Christianity, and yet have reached the conclusion that Christianity is not divine; but what account are we to give of such scepticism as this? on what principles are we to explain how it comes to pass, that, where truth has been sought for it has not been found? Nay, we may seem to give an uncharitable answer; this we must not mind, so long as we give a scriptural answer. Our text, if it stood alone, would be sufficient to prove that in every case infidelity must be traced to the wilful fault of the inquirer. You should remember that it would be greatly for the interests of a worldly man, to prove Christianity false; he would thereby get rid of much which menaces him in his pleasures, and secure himself, in great measure, against the pleadings of conscience. And the probabilities are that the unbeliever has been biased throughout his investigation by the felt advantage it would be to him

if he could come to a decision against Christianity; that, as he has passed along the series of evidence which constitute together the very mightiest of demonstrations, he has been pained whenever they wore to him an aspect of strength, and pleased when he thought he could discover a flaw. His disposition has been just the opposite of that described in our text; in place of a readiness to do God's will, whatever that will may be, there has been an eagerness to keep that will out of sight, wherever it might possibly be at variance with his own; how then was it to be expected that a mind thus prejudiced against Christianity, with inclinations thus set on its rejection, could be a fair judge of evidences, or hold the scales evenly between counter testimonies?

But take the more direct way of proving our text: suppose a man ready to do God's will, anxious to discover, in order that he may perform it; we may be sure of such a man, that he is already striving to be obedient, up to the full measure of his knowledge. There could not be the supposed readiness if the conduct were not regulated by such portions of the Divine will as have been already ascertained, and it follows from this that whatever his acquaintance with natural or revealed religion, he will have his passions in check, that he will not be the slave of depraved inclinations, and that, therefore, he will search after truth with the clear headedness of one whose understanding is not darkened by the mists which always rise from a heart in love with vice. And further, it is evident, that forasmuch as he is quite prepared to obey, provided he can only determine what is truth, he will not be swayed by any partialities; his simple object is "to know of the doctrine;" he has no private interest to serve by hiding or perverting it, and we may therefore calculate on his conducting his inquiry with that fairness, that integrity of purpose, and that freedom from bias which almost ensure that his conclusions will be sound. Is it likely that a man thus sincerely desirous of obeying the will of God, should fall into fatal error or mistake on any matter of religion? Likely! I dare pronounce it impossible, for you must add to considerations drawn from the structure of the human mind, that the special assistance of God may be expected to attend the man who searches after truth, in the temper thus described. The attributes and the word of God equally pledge him to the communicating a knowledge of his will wherever it is faithfully sought. No supposition should be more completely at variance with all that either Christianity or reason ascribes to God, than that of his leaving a sincere inquirer uninformed, or failing to guard from all dangerous delusions any one who is honestly inquiring after truth. If it be a principle in the Divine dealings, to give over to a reprobate mind those who like not to retain God in their knowledge, and allow the understanding to be so darkened that men shall believe a lie, when they have long shown that they have pleasure in unrighteousness, it must be equally a principle with God to guide the meek in judgment, and to teach the meek his way, so that they who heartily seek shall assuredly discover what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God: therefore do we believe that the Holy Spirit will assist any and every man, as with full readiness to obey, he sets himself to examine the Bible. That Spirit will certainly guide him in his search and lead him on towards truth, seeing that there is freedom from those prejudices, those perversities and hostilities which grieve the Holy Spirit, impede his operations, and provoke his withdrawal. Why, then, should we not give as our text gives, a simple readiness

to do the will of God, as the great qualification for the acquisition of knowledge, the great security against falling into error? As the man in whom there is a repugnance to the doing God's will, would be unable to judge the force of evidence, to balance testimonies, to unravel perplexities; the man, on the contrary, in whom there is the readiness, has all those probabilities—might we not say certainties?—in his favour, which result from the human mind being healthful in its workings and the Divine Spirit prompt in its assistance. We set, then, the illiterate man, the poor mechanic or countryman, in whom there is the readiness, against the acutest and best informed, in whom there is not the readiness. We give the Bible into the hand of each, and set each to the ascertaining whether it be indeed the word of God. The one shall surround himself with the ponderous volumes into which the learned have gathered the vast credentials of Christianity; he shall busy himself in the demonstrations of Paley and Butler, and he shall sit in judgment on the testimony of miracles; and history shall pass before him teeming with the accomplishment of prophecy; but the other, the poor and illiterate man, shall be unable thus to search out the external evidences on which Christianity rests; he shall have no witness for the Bible but the Bible itself; his only equipment in the prosecution of his inquiry shall be just that sincerity of purpose in which the other is wanting; and we shall be quite prepared to find that the man whose only weapon was the readiness to obey, wholly distanced the other, who, without that readiness, handled all the stores of the intellectual armory. Whatever be that property in Scripture—and such a property there is—through which it manifests itself as truth to the human conscience, we should expect to find the manifestation withholden in the one case, and vouchsafed in the other. The disposition towards obedience has put the mind of the one into the precise attitude which is fitted for the admission of truth; the want of such a disposition has fenced up that of the other against the entrance of the simplest of its elements. If, then, we see the illiterate outstrip the man of great reasoning powers and ample erudition, reaching the conclusion of the Divine authority of the Bible, and reposing there with thorough satisfaction, whilst the other is driven to and fro on the broad waste of uncertainty, and at last left in confirmed infidelity; why, we shall feel that we only behold what was to have been fully expected, for there is the strict connection of cause and effect, as well as the assertion of an inspired teacher in the words of our text—"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

What does all this assume? Why it assumes that the Bible is its own witness, that the Bible can prove of itself and by itself, that it came from God. If the readiness to perform what is written in the Bible insure of itself the discovering the author of the Bible; if, as you find Christ elsewhere affirming, the eye being single be enough to make it certain that the whole body shall be full of light; if according to the Psalmist, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;" and according to the Evangelist, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself"—why, we necessarily conclude that there is an evidence of God speaking in the Bible, which is only to be found and appreciated where certain moral qualities are possessed, but which nevertheless is to the full as convincing as the combined testimony for miracle and prophecy. And is there not? I take the case of a pious but uneducated man who has never been instructed in what are called the evidences

of Christianity, and who would hardly comprehend them were they spread out before him. We declare of this man—and I trust the experience of some of you goes along with the declaration—that as he peruses the Bible it commends itself to him as “the word of the living God,” and that too with a force and distinctness which leave him in no doubt as to the source whence it came. What he reads so tallies with what he knows of himself, of his nature, and his wants that he cannot doubt its truth, nor question that a more than human wisdom had to do with its authorship. Let me show you this in regard of what the Bible says, first of our sinful condition, and, secondly, our salvation through Christ.

The Bible sets out with a broad statement of human corruption, exempting no one from the charge of radical enmity to that gracious being who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. And this charge is not made only in the general, for then very possibly it would be evaded or overlooked—it descends into particulars. The deceitful heart is spoken of; and the tendency of the affections to fasten on any object rather than God is broadly affirmed; a disposition constantly preferring what is finite and perishable to the unbounded and everlasting is continually asserted. And as the man of honest mind peruses a book which thus professes to give him a picture of himself, and that, too, a picture so stern and revolting, he compares what is written with what he finds in himself, and the comparison does but assure him of the thorough accuracy of the delineation. This is one great mode in which the Bible evidences itself to be the word of the Almighty. We defy a man to bring it to the bar of his own experience, and not give a verdict in favour of its Divinity. It may be said to lay man open to himself, to dissect with the most searching moral anatomy the very thoughts and devices of his heart, to give such account of all that goes on in the soul's impenetrable solitudes that one would have supposed that the writer must have descended into those solitudes, have observed what was moving there and inspected what was done there. This is much; and it is a mighty argument for God speaking in the Bible, that comparing what it says we are, with what we find ourselves to be, we discover an agreement or concurrence too close and circumstantial to be accounted for by mere human sagacity.

But we can go further. This self-evidencing power of the Bible is to be seen in what it says of our salvation, just as well as what it says of our condition by nature. It may be that the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, because, not having searched out their own moral acquirements, they must necessarily be blind to the precision with which the gospel meets them all. But the man who has felt himself a sinner, and who has therefore assented to all that Scripture tells him of his condition by nature, will be conscious of such a suitableness in the whole scheme of redemption, as will of itself be an almost irresistible argument in favour of its truth. There is not a particular which his own reasonings may have suggested to him of the hatred of sin, of the necessity for its punishment under such a government as the Divine, of the difficulties therefore, which must lie in the way of his forgiveness—there is not, I say, a single particular which has not evidently entered into the mind of the author of the gospel, and been taken account of in the wondrous arrangement.

And if he pass from his reasonings and forebodings to all that Scripture affirms of the relation in which a sinful creature stands to the righteous

Creator, he still finds that there is neither an attribute of God nor a want of man which has not been thoroughly considered in the wondrous scheme of the suretyship of Christ. And if the exact adaptation of the material world to our natural circumstances be allowed as good evidence that God made the world, the just as exact adaptation of the gospel to our spiritual circumstances should be received as good evidence that God planned the gospel. Ay, and as even a poor man who was never schooled in the lessons of natural theology might feel the smile of God in the sunshine which gladdened him, hear the voice of God in the melodies which soothed him, and trace the hand of God in the supplies which sustained him; so might he convince himself of doctrines which dispersed all his anxieties, met all his wishes, and satisfied all his wants, though he had never heard the demonstrations of the schools, and was never trained to the defence of Christianity. Neither do we stop here in our assertion of the power of the Bible to prove its own origin. There is yet another evidence, even that which results from putting Scripture to the proof, and finding it made good. If I act on the directions of the Bible, and find myself made a partaker of the promises of the Bible, I am my own witness that the directions were issued and the promises given by God. If the Bible tell me that if I pray in Christ's name, I shall obtain what I need, and if thus praying I actually receive; if the Bible tell me that through believing in Christ I shall be progressively sanctified, and if I find the holiness following on the faith; if the Bible promise me peace through the performing certain duties, and if the peace in my experience attend the performance, why, there is a growing evidence to the Divine origin of Scripture, an evidence which is increased by every answered prayer, by every mastered temptation, by every fulfilled promise; so that, along the whole line of Christian experience there may not be a point at which he who seeks the credentials of the Bible in the Bible itself, is not accumulating testimony as conclusive as was ever won on any field of demonstration. Thus, if you will combine the particulars on which we have rapidly touched—the correspondence between what the Bible says of a man, and what that man is able to discover concerning himself—the precision with which all that the Bible offers him in the way of moral remedy meets what he feels to be the necessities of his case—and then bringing Scripture to the test of experience, and finding that it will bear being put to the proof—if, we say, you will combine these particulars, you are in possession of an argument for the self-evidencing power of holy writ, which may serve to convince you that the inspired volume may satisfy a man as to the divinity of its authorship, though that man have no apparatus to work with but the simple apparatus of a Bible and a conscience. And so long as we can thus establish that the Bible carries with it its own credentials, we may confidently declare that the pious among the poor do not receive it as divine merely on the authority of others. They may at first have received it on such authority, but after a while they practically make out for themselves something of that proof which we have endeavoured to exhibit; and though perhaps they never strictly arranged this proof, and could not state it step by step to another, yet does it settle down in their minds with all the fixedness of an irreversible demonstration, and they are not to be shaken in it by all the world's sophistries, and they are not to be bribed from it by all the world's treasures. The pious poor and illiterate among us are far enough from having no reason for the hope that is

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in them. Their reason may not be one whose force will be confessed by an infidel antagonist; but it is as sustaining and convincing to themselves as is the finest argumentative process to the great champions of Christianity. I will tell you what it is—they take Jesus for what he says he is, and they find Jesus just what he says he is. Oh, blessed evidence, worth all the logic in the world! And as becoming daily confirmed in obedience, they become daily confirmed in their belief in the Bible, their persuasion that it is the word of the Almighty strengthening in proportion the strength of their determination to yield themselves unreservedly to his service; let them not be regarded as the credulous, who believe without cause, or as the enthusiastic, who imagine a cause where it does not exist. They are but living examples of the accuracy with which the words of Christ in our text are made good. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

Now, the great practical inference which we wish to draw from what we count a most important and instructive subject of address, is one that refers to the temper with which you should hear and read the gospel of Christ. You are to observe, that a readiness to perform God's will is the great security and guide to its discovery. If the doctrines of Scripture remain hidden to any of you, the doctrine of the atonement, of the Trinity in unity, of human corruption, of the work of the Holy Spirit, it is not through deficiency of revelation, it is not through defect in your intellectual powers. The doctrines are set forth with sufficient clearness, and the mind of all but the idiot is ample enough, acute enough, logical enough to understand, and to receive them. The only reason to be given for the rejection of these doctrines is a reason derived from the heart and not from the head. You would quickly comprehend the truth if you were prepared on discovering it to make it the rule of your practice; and therefore, we exhort you, whenever you open the Bible, or whenever you come up to God's house—we exhort you to examine yourselves, whether you be honestly desirous of ascertaining truth. 'Do I wish to be convinced?' would be a hard question to many readers of chapters and many hearers of sermons. 'Should I be taken at my word?' This is often a hard question, if you put it to yourselves in the midst of your prayers. There is a sort of unacknowledged but powerful consciousness that if convinced, men must alter their lives; and therefore, practically, they stave off conviction, because they will not give up their pleasures. Now, we may preach with all our energy, but we shall preach for the most part in vain, whilst this moral dishonesty prevails amongst our hearers. If you secretly wish to remain ignorant, because you secretly wish to remain vicious, we may reason, and prove and demonstrate, but we only bring light to the man who has closed his eyes and who is averse to the opening them, because anxious not to see. We want minds open to conviction, and it is your business to labour that you may bring such minds to the ministrations of the gospel; it is your business to see to it that you do not bar up against the preacher all the avenues of your spirits by cherishing a dislike to his doctrines, which will make you impervious to his demonstrations. This is one of the main hindrances to the success of preaching, a hindrance altogether attributable to yourselves, and for which ye yourselves are altogether answerable. The mind is made up not to be persuaded, and then, assail it how you will, it is almost sure to hold fast to falsehood. We just now hinted that something

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of the same kind takes place in regard to prayer. Attend to it; it may apply to many amongst you. Prayers are frustrated, because they are not honest. You ask, in words at least, to be made better than you are. "Better." Well, that really means that you may be enabled to give up some pursuit or some vice of which you are fond. Ah, do you mean what you say when you ask to be thus enabled? Would you really like to give up the pursuit or the vice? Or to be made better means that you may lead a godly and a righteous life. Examine yourselves: does not such a life seem very dull to you? Would you really like to live it? That is, would you really like God to take you at your word when you pray? But we speak now rather of the hindrances which the want of honesty puts in the way of your believing what you hear in God's house. Men may talk very plausibly of not being answerable for their faith, as though it were not optional with them to believe or disbelieve; but it is optional with them whether to mortify or to indulge a passion, whether to persist in or abstain from practices which are sure to warp the understanding and influence its decisions. And therefore, will any one of you, who may die in unbelief, be charged with the whole guilt of that unbelief; condemned for it as for a sin which has been wilfully, flagitiously committed; for let what will be said of the mysterious and incomprehensible things in the Bible, and of the weakness of human faculties; regulate the life by what you know, and you will be sure to know more; so that, in the words of our text lies a principle on which the last judgment may proceed, a principle on which every unbeliever may be tried, found guilty, and condemned. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

The New Park Street Pulpit.

HIS NAME—THE COUNSELLOR.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor."—Isaiah ix. 6.

LAST Sabbath morning we considered the first title, "His name shall be called Wonderful;" this morning we take the second word, "Counsellor." I need not repeat the remark, that of course these titles belong only to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that we cannot understand the passage except by referring it to Messiah—the Prince. It was by a Counsellor that this world was ruined. Did not Satan mask himself in the serpent, and counsel the woman with exceeding craftiness, that she should take unto herself of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, in the hope that thereby she should be as God? Was it not that evil counsel which provoked our mother to rebel against her Maker, and did it not as the effect of sin, bring death into this world with all its train of woe? Ah! beloved, it was meet that the world should have a Counsellor to restore it, if it had a Counsellor to destroy it. It was by counsel that it fell, and certainly, without counsel it never could have arisen. But mark the difficulties that surrounded such a Counsellor. 'Tis easy to counsel mischief; but how hard to counsel wisely! To cast down is easy, but to build up how hard! To confuse this world, and bring upon it all its train of ills was an easy thing. A woman plucked the fruit and it was done; but to restore order to this confusion, to sweep away the evils which brooded over this fair earth, this was work indeed, and "Wonderful" was that Christ who came forward to attempt the work, and who in the plenitude of his wisdom hath certainly accomplished it, to his own honour and glory, and to our comfort and safety.

We shall now enter upon the discussion of this title which is given to Christ, a title peculiar to our Redeemer; and you will see why it should be given to him, and why there was a necessity for such a Counsellor.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ is a Counsellor in a three-fold sense. First, he is *God's Counsellor*; he sits in the cabinet council of the King of heaven; he has admittance into the privy chamber, and is the Counsellor with God. In the second place, Christ is a Counsellor in the sense which the Septuagint translation appends to this term. Christ is said to be *the angel of the great council*. He is a Counsellor in that he communicates to us in God's behalf, what has been done in the great council before the foundation of the world. And thirdly, Christ is a *Counsellor to us and with us*, because we can consult with him, and he doth counsel and advise us as to the right way and the path of peace.

I. Beginning then, with the first point, Christ may well be called Counsellor, for he is a COUNSELLOR WITH GOD. And here let us speak with reverence, for we are about to enter upon a very solemn subject. It hath been revealed to us that before the world was, when as yet God had not made the stars, long ere space sprang into being, the Almighty God did hold a solemn conclave with himself; Father, Son and Spirit held a mystic council with each other, as to what they were about to do. That council, although we read but little of it in Scripture, was nevertheless most certainly held; we have abundant traces of it, for though it is a doctrine obscure through the effulgence of that light to which no man can approach, and not simply and didactically explained, as some other doctrines are, yet we have continual tracings and incidental mentionings of that great, eternal, and wonderful council, which was held between the three glorious persons of the

Trinity before the world began. Our first question with ourselves is, why did God hold a council at all? And here, we must answer, that God did not hold a council because of any deficiency in his knowledge, for God understandeth all things from the beginning; his knowledge is the sum total of everything that is noble, and infinite is that sum total, infinitely above everything that is counted noble by us. Thou, O God, hast thoughts that are unsearchable, and thou knowest what no mortal ken can ever attain unto. Nor, again, did God hold any consultation for the increase of his satisfaction. Sometimes men, when they have determined what to do, will nevertheless seek counsel of their friends, because they say, "If their advice agrees with mine it adds to my satisfaction, and confirms me in my resolution." But God is everlastingly satisfied with himself, and knoweth not the shadow of a doubt to cloud his purpose; therefore, the council was not held with any motive or intent of that sort. Nor, again, was it held with a view of deliberation. Men take weeks and months and sometimes years, to think out a thing that is surrounded with difficulties; they have to find the clue with much research; enveloped in folds of mystery, they have to take off first one garment and then another, before they find out the naked, glorious truth. Not so God. God's deliberations are as flashes of lightning; they are as wise as if he had been eternally considering, but the thoughts of his heart, though swift as lightning, are as perfect as the whole system of the universe. The reason why God is represented as holding a council, if I think rightly, is this: that we might understand how wise God is. "In the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom." It is for us to think that in the council of the Eternal Three, each Person in the undivided Trinity being omniscient and full of wisdom, there must have been the sum total of all wisdom. And again, it was to show the unanimity and co-operation of the sacred persons: God the Father hath done nothing alone in creation or salvation. Jesus Christ hath done nothing alone; for even the work of his redemption, albeit that he suffered in some sense alone, needed the sustaining hand of the Spirit, and the accepting smile of the Father, before it could be completed. God said not, "I will make man," but "Let us make man in our own image." God saith not merely, "I will save," but the inference from the declarations of Scripture is, that the design of the three persons of the blessed Trinity was to save a people to themselves, who should show forth their praise. It was, then, for our sakes, not for God's sake, the council was held—that we might know the unanimity of the glorious persons, and the deep wisdom of their devices.

Yet another remark concerning the council. It may be asked, "What were the topics deliberated upon at that first council, which was held before the day-star knew its place, and planets ran their round?" We reply, "The first topic was creation." We are told in the passage we have read, (Proverbs viii.) that the Lord Jesus Christ, who represents himself as Wisdom, was with God before the world was created, and we have every reason to believe that we are to understand this as meaning, that he was not only with God in company, but with God in co-operation. Besides, we have other Scriptures to prove that "all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." And to quote yet another passage that clinches this truth. God said, "Let us make man;" so that a part of the consultation was with reference to the making of worlds, and the creatures that should inhabit them. I believe that in the sovereign council of eternity, the mountains were weighed in scales, and the hills in balances; then was it fixed in sovereign council how far the sea should go, and where should be its bounds—when the sun shall arise and come forth, like a giant from the chambers of his darkness, and when he should return again to his couch of rest. Then did God decree the moment when he should say, "Let there be light," and the moment when the sun should be turned into darkness, and the moon into a clot of blood. Then did he ordain the form and size of every angel, and the destinies of every creature; then did he sketch in his infinite thought, the eagle as he soared to heaven, and the worm as he burrowed into the earth. Then the little as well as the great, the minute as well as the immense, came under the sovereign decree of God. There was that book written, of which Dr. Watts sings—

"Chained to his throne a volume lies,
With all the fates of men,
With every angel's form and size,
Drawn by th' ethereal pen."

Christ was a Counsellor in the matter of creation; with none else took he counsel, none else instructed him. Christ was the Counsellor for all the wondrous works of God.

The second topic that was discussed in this council was the *work of Providence*. God does not act towards this world like a man who makes a watch, and lets it have its own way till it runs down; he is the controller of every wheel in the machine of providence. He has left nothing to itself. We talk of general laws, and philosophers tell us that the world is governed by laws, and then they put the Almighty out of the question. Now, how can a nation be governed by laws apart from a sovereign, or apart from magistrates and rulers to carry out the laws? All the laws may be in the statute book, but put all the police away, take away every magistrate, remove the high court of parliament, what is the use of laws? Laws cannot govern without active agency to carry them out; nor could nature proceed in its everlasting cycles, by the mere force of law. God is the great motive-power of all things; he is in everything. Not only did he make all things, but by him all things consist. From all eternity, Christ was the Counsellor of his Father with regard to providence—when the first man should be born, when he should wander, and when he should be restored—when the first monarchy should rise, and when its sun should set—where his people should be placed, how long they should be placed, and where they should be moved. Was it not the Most High who divided to the nations their inheritance? Hath he not appointed the bounds of our habitation? Oh! heir of heaven, in the day of the great council, Christ counselled his Father as to the weight of thy trials, as to the number of thy mercies, if they be numerable, and as to the time, the way, and the means whereby thou shouldst be brought to himself. Remember, there is nothing that happens in your daily life, but what was first of all devised in eternity, and counselled by Jesus Christ for your good and in your behalf, that all things might work together for your lasting benefit and profit. But, my friends, what unfathomable depths of wisdom must have been involved, when God consulted with himself with regard to the great book of providence! Oh, how strange providence seems to you and to me! Does it not look like a zig-zag line, this way and that way, backward and forward, like the journeyings of the children of Israel in the wilderness? Ah! my brethren, but to God it is a straight line. Directly, God always goes to his object; and yet to us, he often seems to go round about. Ah! Jacob, the Lord is about to provide for thee in Egypt, when there is a famine in Canaan, and he is about to make thy son Joseph great and mighty. Joseph must be sold for a slave; he must be accused wrongfully; he must be put into the pit, and in the round-house prison he must suffer. But God was going straight to his purpose all the while: he was sending Joseph before them into Egypt that they might be provided for, and when the good old patriarch said, "All these things are against me," he did not perceive the providence of God, for there was not a solitary thing in the whole list that was against him, but everything was ruled for his weal. Let us learn to leave providence in the hand of the Counsellor; let us rest assured that he is too wise to err in his predestination, and too good to be unkind, and that in the council of eternity, the best was ordained that could have been ordained—that if you and I had been there, we could not have ordained half so well, but that we should have made ourselves eternal fools by meddling therewith. Rest certain, that in the end we shall see that all was well, and must be well for ever. He is "Wonderful, the Counsellor," for he counselled in matters of providence.

And now with regard to *matters of grace*. These were also discussed in the everlasting council. When the Three Divine Persons in the solemn seclusion of their own loneliness consulted together with reference to the works of grace, one of the first things they had to consider was, how God should be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly—how the world should be reconciled unto God. Hence you read in the book of Zechariah, if you turn to the sixth chapter and the thirteenth verse, this passage—"The council of peace shall be between them both." The Son of God with his Father and the Spirit, ordained the council of peace. Thus was it arranged. The Son must suffer; he must be the substitute, must bear his people's sins and be punished in their stead; the Father must accept the Son's substitution and allow his people to go free, because Christ had paid their debts. The Spirit of the living God must then cleanse the people whom the blood had pardoned, and so they must be accepted before the presence of God, even the Father. That was the result of the great council. But O my brethren, if it

had not been for that council, what a question would have been left unsolved? Neither you nor I could ever have thought how the two should meet together—how mercy and justice should kiss each other over the mountain of our sins. I have always thought that one of the greatest proofs that the gospel is of God, is its revelation that Christ died to save sinners. That is a thought so original, so new, so wonderful; you have not got it in any other religion in the world; so that it must have come from God. As I remember to have heard an un-schooled and illiterate man say, when I first told him the simple story of how Christ was punished in the stead of his people: he burst out with an air of surprise, "Faith! that's the gospel, I know; no man could have made that up; that must be of God." That wonderful thought, that a God himself should die, that he himself should bear our sins, that so God the Father might be able to forgive and yet exact the utmost penalty, is super-human, super-angelic; not even the cherubim and seraphim could have been the inventors of it: but that thought was first struck out from the mind of God in the councils of eternity, when the "Wonderful, the Counsellor," was present with his Father.

Again: another part of the great council was this—*who should be saved?* Now, my friends, you that like not old Calvinistic doctrine will perhaps be horrified, but that I cannot help; I will never modify a doctrine I believe to please any man that walks upon earth; but I will prove from Scripture that I have the warrant of God in this matter, and that it is not my own invention. I say that one part of the council of eternity was the predestination of those whom God had determined to save, and I will read you the passage that proves it. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The predestination of everyone of God's people was arranged at the eternal council, where God's will sat as the sovereign umpire and undisputed president. There was it said of each redeemed one, "At such an hour I will call him by my grace, for I have loved him with an everlasting love, and by my lovingkindness will I draw him." There was it originated when the peace-speaking blood shall be laid to that elect one's conscience, when the Spirit of the living God shall breathe joy and consolation into his heart. There was it settled how that chosen one should be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" and there was it determined and settled by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, that everyone of these should be eternally saved, beyond the shadow of a risk of perishing. The apostle Paul was not like some preachers, who are afraid to say a word about the everlasting council; for he says in his epistle to the Hebrews—"God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his council, confirmed it by an oath." Now, you hear some talk about the immutability of the promise: that is good. But the immutability of God's counsel,—that is to fathom to the very uttermost the doctrines of grace. The council of God from all eternity is immutable; not one purpose has he ever altered, not one decree has he ever changed; he has nailed his decrees against the pillars of eternity, and though the devils have sought to rend them down from the posts of his magnificent palace, yet, saith he, "have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion;" the decree shall stand; I will do all my pleasure. Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth; thou, Lord, in the beginning hast made the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth; thou hast determined thy plans and purposes, and they stand fast for ever and ever.

I think I have sufficiently declared how Christ was the Counsellor, in the transcendent affairs of nature, providence, and grace, in the everlasting council-chamber of eternity. But now I would have you notice what a mercy it was that there was such a counsellor with God, and how fit Christ was to be the Counsellor. Christ himself is wisdom. He chargeth his angels with folly; but he is God only wise himself. If a fool undertake to be a counsellor, his counsel is folly; but when Christ counselled, his counsel was full of wisdom. But there is another qualification necessary for a counsellor. However wise a man be, he has no right to be a counsellor with a king, unless he has some dignity and standing. There may happen to be in my congregation some person of great talent; but if my friend should present himself at the cabinet council and give his advice, he would most probably be unceremoniously dismissed, for they would say, "Art thou of the king's council; if not, what right hast thou to stand here?" Now Christ was glorious; he was equal with his Father, therefore he had a right to counsel God—to counsel

with God. Had an angel offered his advice to God it would have been an insufferable impertinence; had the cherubim or seraphim volunteered to give so much as one word of counsel it would have been blasphemy. He would take no counsel from his creatures. Why should wisdom stoop from its throne, to counsel with created folly? But because Christ was far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, therefore he had a right, not only from his wisdom, but from his rank, to be a Counsellor with God.

But there is one thing that is always necessary in a man, before we can rejoice in his being a counsellor. There are some counsellors concerning the legislation of our country in whom you or I could not rejoice much, because we feel that in their counsels the most of us would be forgotten. Our farming friends would probably rejoice in them; they will consult their interests, there is not much doubt; but whoever heard of a counsellor yet who counselled for the poor? or who has these many years heard so much as an inkling of the name of a man who really counselled for economy and for the good of his nation. We have plenty of men who promise us that they will counsel for us—abundance of men who, if we would but return them to parliament, would most assuredly pour forth such wisdom in our behalf that without doubt we should be the most happy and enlightened people in the world according to their promise; but alas! when they get into office they have no hearty sympathy with us; they belong to a different rank from the most of us, they do not sympathize with the wants and the desires of the middle class and of the poor. But, with regard to Christ, we can put every confidence in him, for we know that in that council from eternity he sympathized with man. He says, "My delights were with the sons of men." Happy men to have a counsellor who delights in them! Moreover, he then, though he was not man, yet foresaw that he was to be "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," and therefore in the counsels of eternity he pleaded his own cause when he pleaded our cause, for he well knew that he was to be tempted in all points like as we are, and was to suffer our sufferings and to be our covenant head in union with ourselves. Sweet Counsellor! I love to think thou wast in the everlasting council, my friend, my brother born for adversity!

II. Having thus discussed the first point, I shall proceed to consider briefly the second, according to the translation of the Septuagint. Christ is THE ANGEL OF THE GREAT COUNCIL. Do you and I want to know what was said and done in the great council of eternity? Yes, we do. I will defy any man, whoever he may be, not to want to know something about destiny. What means the ignorance of the common people, when they appeal to the witch, the pretender? when they enquire of the astrologer, and read the book of the pretended soothsayer? Why, it means that man wants to know something about the everlasting council. And what mean all the perplexing researches of certain persons into the prophecies? I consider very often that the inferences drawn from prophecy are very little better, after all, than the guesses of the Norwood gipsy, and that some people who have been so busy in foretelling the end of the world, would have been better employed if they had foretold the end of their own books, and had not imposed on the public by predictions, assaying to interpret the prophecies, without the shadow of a foundation. But, from their credulity we may learn, that among the higher class as well as among the more ignorant, there is a strong desire to know the councils of eternity. Beloved, there is only one glass through which you and I can look back to the dim darkness of the shrouded past, and read the counsels of God, and that glass is the person of Jesus Christ. Do I want to know what God ordained with regard to the salvation of man from before the foundation of the world? I look to Christ; I find that it was ordained in Christ that he should be the first elect, and that a people should be chosen in him. Do you ask the way in which God ordained to save? I answer, he ordained to save by the cross. Do you ask how God ordained to pardon? The answer comes, he ordained to pardon through the sufferings of Christ, and to justify through his resurrection from the dead. Everything that you want to know with regard to what God ordained, everything that you ought to know, you can find out in the person of Jesus Christ. And again, do I long to know the great secret of destiny? I must look to Christ. What mean these wars, this confusion, these garments rolled in blood? I see Christ born of a virgin, and then I read the world's history backwards, and I see that all this led to Christ's coming. I see that all these leaned one upon another, as I have sometimes seen clusters of rocks leaning on each other, and Christ the great leading rock bearing up the superincumbent mass of all past history. And

if I want to read the future I look at Christ, and I learn that he who has gone up to heaven, is to come again from heaven in like manner as he went up to heaven. So all the future is clear enough to me. I do not know whether the Pope of Rome is to obtain universal empire or not; I do not mind whether the Russian empire is to swallow up all the nations of the continent; there is one thing I know; God will overturn, overturn, overturn, till he shall come whose right it is to reign; and I know that though the worms devour my body, yet when he shall stand in that latter day upon the earth, in my flesh shall I see God, and there is enough in that for me. All the rest of history is unimportant compared with its end, its issues, its purpose. The end of the first Testament is the first advent of Christ; the end of this second Testament of modern history is the second advent of the Saviour; and then shall the book of time be closed. But none could open the Old Testament history and make it out, except through Christ. Abraham could understand it, for he knew that Christ was to come; Christ opened the book for him. And so modern history is never to be understood except through Christ. None but the Lamb can take the book and open every seal; but he who believeth in Christ and looks for his glorious advent, he may open the book and read therein, and have understanding, for in Christ there is a revelation of the eternal councils.

"Now," says one, "Sir, I want to know one thing, and if I knew that, I would not care what happened. I want to know whether God from all eternity ordained me to be saved." Well, friend, I will tell you how to find that out, and you may find it out to a certainty. "Nay," says one, "but how can I know that? You cannot read the book of fate; that is impossible." I have heard of some divine, of a very hyper school indeed, who said, "Ah! blessed be the Lord, there are some of God's dear people here; I can tell them by the very look of their faces; I know that they are among God's elect." He was not half so discreet as Rowland Hill, who, when he was advised to preach to none but the elect, said, "He would certainly do so if some one would chalk them all on the back first." That was never attempted by anybody; so Rowland Hill went on preaching the gospel to every creature, as I desire to do. But you may find out whether you are among his chosen ones. "How?" says one. Why, Christ is the angel of the covenant, and you can find it out by looking to him. Many people want to know their election before they look to Christ. Beloved, you cannot know your election, except as you see it in Christ. If you want to know your election, thus shall you assure your hearts before God.—Do you feel yourself this morning to be a lost, guilty sinner? go straightway to the cross of Christ, and tell Christ that, and tell him that you have read in the Bible, "That him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out." Tell him that he has said, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom you are chief." Look to Christ and believe on him, and you shall make proof of your election directly, for so surely as thou believest thou art elect. If thou wilt give thyself wholly up to Christ and trust him, then thou art one of God's chosen ones; but if you stop and say, "I want to know first whether I am elect," that is impossible. If there be something covered up, and I say, "Now, before you can see this you must lift the veil;" and you say, "Nay, but I want to see right through that veil," you cannot. Lift the veil first, and you shall see. Go to Christ, guilty, just as you are. Leave all curious inquiry about thy election alone. Go straight away to Christ, just as you are, black, naked, penniless and poor, and say,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling,"

and you shall know your election. The assurance of the Holy Spirit shall be given to you, so that you shall be able to say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." Now, do notice this. Christ was at the everlasting council: he can tell you whether you were chosen or not; but you cannot find that out anyhow else. You go and put your trust in him, and I know what the answer will be. His answer will be—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore in lovingkindness have I drawn thee." There will be no doubt about his having chosen you, when you shall feel no doubt about having chosen him.

So much for the second point. Christ is the Counsellor. He is the angel of the council, because he tells out God's secrets to us. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant."

III. The last point was, Christ is a COUNSELLOR to us. And here I shall

want to give some practical hints to God's people. Some how or other, brethren, it is not good for man to be alone. A lonely man must be, I think, a miserable man; and a man without a Counsellor, I think, must of necessity go wrong. "Where there is no counsellor," says Solomon, "the people fall." I think most persons will find it so. A man says, "Well, I'll have my own way, and I will ask nobody." Have it, air,—have it—and you will find that in having your own way you have probably had the worst way you could. We all feel our need at times of a counsellor. David was a man after God's own heart and dealt much with his God; but he had his Ahithophel, with whom he took sweet counsel, and they walked to the house of God in company. Kings must have some advisers. Woe unto the man that hath got a bad counsellor. Rehoboam took counsel of the young men, and not of the old men, and they counselled him so that he lost tenths of his empire. Some take counsel of stocks and stones. We know many who counsel at the hands of foolish charms, instead of going to Christ. They shall have to learn that there is but one Christ, who is to be trusted; and that however necessary a counsellor may be, yet none other shall be found to fulfil the necessity, but Jesus Christ the Counsellor. Let me make a remark or two with regard to this Counsellor, Jesus Christ.

And, first, Christ is a *necessary Counsellor*. So sure as we do anything without asking counsel of God we fall into trouble. Israel made a league with Gibeon, and it is said, they took of their victuals, and they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord, and they found out that the Gibeonites had deceived them. If they had asked counsel first, no cunning deception could have imposed on them in the matter. Saul, the son of Kish, died before the Lord upon the mountains of Gilboa, and in the book of Chronicles it is written, he died because he asked not counsel of God, but sought unto the wizards. Joshua, the great commander, when he was appointed to succeed Moses, was not left to go alone, but it is written, "And Eliezer the priest shall be his counsellor, and he shall ask counsel of the Lord for him." And all the great men of olden times, when they were about to do an action, paused, and they said to the priest, "Bring hither the ephod," and he put on the Urim and the Thummim, and appealed to God, and the answer came, and sound advice was vouchsafed. You and I will have to learn how necessary it is always to take advice of God. Did you ever seek God's advice on your knees about a difficulty and then go amiss? Brethren, I can testify for my God that when I have submitted my will to his directing Spirit, I have always had reason to thank him for his wise counsel. But when I have asked at his hands, having already made up my own mind, I have had my own way; but like as he fed the Israelites with the quails of heaven, while the meat was yet in their mouth, the wrath of God came upon them. Let us take heed always that we never go before the cloud. He that goes before the cloud goes a fool's errand, and will be glad to get back again. An old puritan used to say, "He that carves for himself will cut his fingers. Leave God to carve for you in providence, and all shall be well. Seek God's guidance and nothing can go amiss." It is necessary counsel.

In the next place, Christ's counsel is *faithful counsel*. When Ahithophel left David, it proved that he was not faithful, and when Hushai went to Absalom and counselled him, he counselled him craftily, so that the good counsel of Ahithophel was brought to nought. Ah! how often do our friends counsel us craftily! We have known them do so. They have looked first to their own advantage, and then they have said, "If I can get him to do so-and-so it will be the best for me." That was not the question we asked them. It was what would be best for ourselves. But we may trust Christ, that in his advice to us there never can be any self-interest. He will be quite certain to advise us with the most disinterested motives, so that the good shall be to us, and the profit to ourselves.

Again, Christ's counsel is *heartly counsel*. I hate to go to a lawyer above all people, to talk with him upon matters of business. The worst kind of conversation is, I think, conversation with a lawyer. There is your case! Dear me, what an interest you feel in it! You spread it out before him, and he says, "There is a word upon the second page not quite correct." You look at it, and you say, "Ah! that is totally unimportant; that does not signify." He turns to another clause and he says, "Ah! there is a good deal here!" "My dear fellow," you say, "I do not care about those petty clauses, whether it says lands, properties, or hereditaments; what I want you to do is to set this difficulty right in point of law." "Be patient," he says; you must go through a great many consultations

before he will come to the point, and all the while your poor heart is boiling over because you feel such an interest in the main point. But he is as cool as possible; you think you are asking counsel of a block of marble. No doubt his advice will come out all right at last, and it is pretty certain it will be good for you; but it is not hearty. He does not enter into the sympathies of the matter with you. What is it to him whether you succeed or not—whether the object of your heart shall be accomplished or not. It is but a professional interest he takes. Now, Solomon says, "As ointment for perfume, so is hearty counsel." When a man throws his own soul into your case, and says, "My dear friend, I'll do anything I can to help you; let me look at it," and he takes as deep an interest in it as you do yourself. "If I were in your position," he says, "I should do so-and-so; by-the-bye, there is a word wrong there." Perhaps he tells you so, but he only tells you because he is anxious to have it all right; and you can see that his drift is always towards the same end you are seeking, and that he is only anxious for your good. Oh! for a Counsellor that could tie your heart into unison with his own! Now Christ is such a Counsellor as that. He is a hearty Counsellor. His interests and your interests are bound up together, and he is hearty with you.

But there is another kind of counsel still. David says of one, who afterwards became his enemy, "We took sweet counsel together." Christian, do you know what sweet counsel is? You have gone to your Master in the day of trouble, and in the secret of your chamber you have poured out your heart before him. You have laid your case before him, with all its difficulties, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's letter, and you have felt, that though Christ was not there in flesh and blood, yet he was there in spirit, and he counselled you. You felt that his was counsel that came from the very heart. But he was something better than that. There was such a sweetness coming with his counsel, such a radiance of love, such a fulness of fellowship, that you said, "Oh that I were in trouble every day, if I might have such sweet counsel as this!" Christ is the Counsellor whom I desire to consult every hour, and I would that I could sit in his secret chamber all day and all night long, because to counsel with him is to have sweet counsel, hearty counsel, and wise counsel, all at the same time. Why, you may have a friend that talks very sweetly with you, and you will say, "Well, he is a kind, good soul, but I really cannot trust his judgment." You have another friend, who has a good deal of judgment, and yet you say of him, "Certainly, he is a man of prudence above a great many, but I cannot find out his sympathy; I never get at his heart; if he were ever so rough and untutored, I would sooner have his heart without his prudence, than his prudence without his heart. But we go to Christ, and we get wisdom; we get love, we get sympathy, we get everything that can possibly be wanted in a Counsellor.

And now we must close by noticing that Christ has special counsels for each of us this morning, and what are they? Tried child of God, your daughter is sick; your gold has melted in the fire; you are sick yourself, and your heart is sad. Christ counsels you, and he says, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, he will sustain you; he will never suffer the righteous to be moved." Young man, you that are seeking to be great in this world, Christ counsels you this morning. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." I shall never forget Midsommer common. I was ambitious; I was seeking to go to college, to leave my poor people in the wilderness that I might become something great; and as I was walking there that text came with power to my heart—"Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." I suppose about forty pounds a year was the sum total of my income, and I was thinking how I should make both ends meet, and whether it would not be a great deal better for me to resign my charge and seek something for the bettering of myself, and so forth. But this text ran in my ears, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." "Lord," said I, "I will follow thy counsel and not my own devices;" and I have never had cause to regret it. Always take the Lord for thy guide, and thou shalt never go amiss. Backslider! thou that hast a name to live, and art dead, or nearly dead, Christ gives thee counsel. "I counsel thee to buy of me, gold tried in the fire and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed." And sinner! thou that art far from God, Christ gives thee counsel. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Depend on it, it is loving counsel. Take it. Go home and cast yourself upon your knees. Seek Christ; obey his counsel, and you shall have to rejoice that you ever listened to his voice, and heard it, and lived.

The Preacher.

No. LIV.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, SEPTEMBER 26, 1858,

BY THE REV. HENRY MELVILL, B.D.,

(Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty, and Canon Residentiary of St. Paul's.)

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, LONDON.

"And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?"—Mark iv. 13.

It is of the parable of the sower who went out to sow his seed that our blessed Lord speaks, in addressing these reproachful questions to his disciples. We call them reproachful, because they evidently imply that the parable of the sower was one which ought to have been understood by the disciples; that if through prejudice or inattention they missed its meaning, no parable could be constructed which would not be above their comprehension. We shall endeavour, on the present occasion, so to treat the parable as to bring out the force and fitness of these questions; but as introductory to this we have some remarks to make upon preaching; for preaching, as you all know, is what the parable describes by sowing seed. Preaching is the great engine which God ordinarily uses in turning sinners from the error of their ways. "It pleased God," says St. Paul, "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"—an expression which not only informs us of the employment of the instrumentality of preaching, but also proves that the effectiveness of preaching is not inherent in itself, but is wholly derived from God's accompanying it with his blessing. It is by the foolishness of preaching that a great moral result is effected; so that we are not to ascribe the success to the power and persuasiveness of the preaching, whatever it may be thought that displays; for it cannot be in these that its "foolishness" lies; but we must ascribe it altogether to the energy of the Holy Spirit, clothing with might some few unadorned and apparently weak words, so that they sink into the heart and undermine the dominion of sin. The more, however, we thus magnify preaching, and declare it the appointed means through which the Spirit acts upon the conscience, the more cause of surprise does there seem that it should with rare exceptions produce no effect. It is not to be denied that on the great mass of our congregations the most faithful preaching of the Gospel falls

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without power. Our churches may be thronged; a mute and rivetted attention may seem to prove that the assembly takes interest in what flows from the lips of the speaker; and it is a fine spectacle, one whose moral beauty is hardly to be rivalled, that of a crowded sanctuary where, amid the silence of hundreds of his fellow-men, the minister of Christ expatiates on the apostasy and redemption of human kind. We say there is a moral beauty in this spectacle which does not exist where, amid a yet denser throng, and perhaps deeper silence, the statesman expounds plans for strengthening the commonwealth, or the patriot tells the story of a country's wrong. The moral beauty is not in the enchaining power of the oratory, nor in the furnished proof how thoughts fresh from an active mind make their way into others, and occupy and delight; it lies simply in the fact, that the gathering to the house of prayer, and the listening eagerly to the word, may be taken as proofs that men feel themselves immortal, and long to learn how heaven may be gained. It is this which gives a dignified and imposing aspect to a crowded church, even that the assembled multitude, heirs as they are of death and corruption, witness by their appearance in the sanctuary, and their attention to the message which is delivered, that they know the grave to be but a resting-place, and that their real life time is eternity. But when we come to infer the amount of actual conversion from conduct in the week, and not from deportment in the church, the conviction is forced upon us, that for hundreds who listen with apparent earnestness to the preached word, there is not perhaps one who receives it into his heart, and when we seek an explanation of this melancholy fact, the parable of the sower comes to our assistance, for it sketches with wonderful fidelity the different classes under which the hearers of the Gospel may be ranged. The parable is a very simple one, one we may suppose, with which you are all well acquainted. A sower goes forth to sow, and the seed which he scatters falls on different kinds of ground. The way side receives some, the beaten path into which the grain could not sink, and the fowls of the air devour this portion. Some again falls upon stony places, where there is only a slight covering of the vegetable soil. Here the seeds quickly germinate, and send up shoots which promise to requite the industry of the husbandman; but the soil is too superficial to allow of a firm root, and when, therefore, the sun rises, the shoots are scorched and wither away. Other seed falls among thorns. The blade appears, but the thorns grow with it and choke it, so that no fruit is produced. But a portion of the seed there is which falls into good ground, where there is depth of earth, and where no thorns grow, and this yields fruit, some a hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. Such is the parable; and as its meaning did not commend itself to his disciples, Christ himself condescended to add the interpretation. He informed them that by the seed was meant "the word of the kingdom;" so that the design of the parable was to exhibit the reception that would be met with by the Gospel as published in different ages by Christ and his apostles. The seed by the way side represents men who hear the word but understand it not; from whose hearts it is quickly caught away by the devil, ever watchful for his prey. The seed sown in stony places is figurative of the Gospel as heard by men who receive it with alacrity, but who, having no root in themselves, endure only for a while, and in time of persecution and tribulation presently apostatise. But some seed fell among thorns—and this is the

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Gospel entering into hearts distracted with worldly cares and anxieties. These cares and anxieties choke the word and it becometh unfruitful. There is, however, after all this waste and disappointment, a portion of seed received into good ground. And here we have the word of the kingdom sinking into an honest and good heart, where it takes deep root, and sends forth fruit abundantly in the life and conversation. And it is evident, in the upshoot of all this figurative representation, that there must be a spiritual husbandry as well as a natural; that as it would be lost labour in the sower if he scattered his seed upon unprepared ground, so is it lost labour in the preacher if he publish his word to unprepared hearts; and that as the ploughshare and mattock must do their part in the field ere it can be of any use to cover it with seeds, so must some mighty agency be brought to bear upon the soul ere good results can be looked for from plying it with God's word. We must, however, examine separately and minutely the several cases here presented, and we begin with the seed that falls by the way side; the fullest Christian charity not allowing us to doubt that this delineates the gospel as heard at least by some in the present assembly. We dare not question, though gladly would we be convicted of forming a wrong judgment—we dare not question that there are those of you who bring to God's house a hardened and indifferent spirit, who are given up to the love of the world, without a purpose, without even a wish of breaking loose from the bondage in which you are held. What can be said of such, hardened by the practice of sin, the conscience seared, and the sensibilities blunted through long resistance to the teachings of God's Spirit? What can be said, but that they are just the trodden and unploughed track into which it is impossible that the gospel should penetrate—the beaten path, over which what is earthly and sensual has been so long used to pass that the surface is like stone, where it is vain to cast the word? You hear the gospel; there is a pause in your career of indifference and worldly-mindedness, for we have, it may be, your eager attention, while now, in the name of the God of the whole earth, we tell you of your deathlessness, and of the tribulation and wrath which shall overtake all who remain impenitent; but we have no moral hold upon you; you have not come hither with the least desire of profiting by the ordinance of preaching; you have brought, it may be, into God's house, your frivolity, your love of the objects of sense, your determination to take part with the world, your dislike to a religion of holiness and self-denial; and now, if for a moment, we have prevailed to the winning you to seriousness, we dare ascribe it to nothing but the power of an honest and straightforward appeal which can compel the ear to listen, but not the heart to feel. It is true that you hear the gospel; yea, in the language of the parable, ye so far "receive the word" as to admit it into the chambers of the mind; but then there is no wish, and therefore no endeavour that it may sink down and gain a permanent lodgement. There is no prayer to Almighty God that he will fix the word upon the conscience, and remove those opposing causes which hinder its efficiency; and enable you, in the language of the prophet, to break up your fallow ground; and, therefore, we may preach, and the seed may be liberally scattered, but all we can sow lies only on the surface, and at the conclusion of a sermon, which has dealt largely with most solemn and glorious truths, into which have been gathered the magnificent things of redemption, which has dilated on the perils of  moment's neglect, because,

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on that moment eternity may hang, we can have no belief in regard of the most of our way side hearers, but that just on what we may call the outward coatings of their hearts, there is deposited much precious seed, and that in a few moments, or at most, a few hours, will all be swept away. We speak of the removal of the seed as certain to take place, because there is an ever watchful adversary setting himself to counteract the spiritual husbandman. The parable, as expounded by our blessed Saviour, speaks of that wicked one, the devil, as coming and taking away the word lest the hearer should believe and be saved: and this is among the most startling representations which the parable furnishes. We learn, on authority which admits no dispute, that in these our solemn assemblings there are present those evil spirits who, shut out from happiness themselves, long to bring on men the same fearful exclusion. Yes, while the preacher is plying his fellow-men with the truth of revelation, and you might infer from the aspect of the listening assembly that he is prevailing on numbers to take Joshua's resolve for their own—"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," fallen angels intently watch the effect of his discourse, ready, when they see any symptoms of yielding to his persuasion, to minister to the support of the dominion of sin. If, by the urgency of his appeal, the preacher cause misgivings of conscience; if, delineating with a bold hand the final ruin of impenitent sinners, he stir the fears of any of his audience; or if, changing his theme and expatiating on heavenly glory, he awaken a desire for a share in the magnificent portion, then will these malignant spirits, hovering invisibly around us, observant of all that passes in the minds recesses, throw in suggestions to allay the anxieties and deaden the sensibilities, and thus to bring back the thoughts and feelings into channels which for the moment were forsaken. Thus, the whole work of the preacher is effectually counteracted, and those over whom for a moment he seemed to have gained a great moral advantage, who were, to all appearance on the point of yielding to remonstrance, and giving themselves up to providing for eternity, depart as hardened and indifferent as they came; and all because there has been no endeavour to prepare themselves for the operation of the sower; they presented the trodden path, and not the ploughed field. What then is to be expected seeing that malignant spirits are hovering around, but that as fast as scattered, the grain will be devoured?

Oh, if I could induce you, those among you, we mean, who come to church with no solemnity of thought, with no remembrance of the end for which public worship has been instituted, with no prayer to God, that he would bless you in the act of entering more immediately into his presence—if we could induce you to prepare yourselves for listening to the word, to attach a sacredness to these our assemblies, and to come here with the desire and hope of obtaining instruction for the soul, we should be persuaded that the work of the spiritual husbandman would not be in vain, and that the seed would sink, ere evil angels could snatch it away. But if you will come up in indifference and worldly-mindedness, as though the church were a common building, and preaching were common speaking, oh! we feel that the preacher, anxious for your salvation, might traverse assiduously the moral deserts of your heart, sowing good seed, and watering it even with tears, but the spirits of darkness will be sure to prevail against all this energy and

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all this devotedness; and we shall be forced to fear of you, when you leave the sanctuary, as of the way side hearers, that the devil hath come and taken the word out of your hearts. Ah, yes, but is not your case a very plain one? Is there any mystery about it? Is deep thought required to make out what we have been describing? No; may we not justly say to you in Christ's words to his disciples—"Know ye not this parable? how then will ye know all parables?"

There are others of you who are not to be accused of attending the ministrations of the Lord with hearts altogether unprepared. Many have a wish for spiritual instruction and form resolves of leading a life of religion, but have not sufficiently counted the cost of joining themselves to the disciples of Christ. Here you have the second class of hearers described in the parable of the sower. These are the men in whom the preached word is as seed sown in stony places, which quickly withers away. It may often happen that the hearers of a sermon which describes the blessedness of true Christianity which dwells on those exceeding great and precious promises which light up the page of Holy Writ, feel a desire to share such privileges, and to have a part in such expectations. In this case the seed does more than lie upon the surface; it sinks into the ground and is not caught away by the devil and his angels. But, alas! there is no deep sense of the evil of sin, no real love of holiness, no genuine desire to obey the will, whatever there may be to enjoy the favour of the Almighty; and thus we have religion without stamina, a kind of fair weather piety which keeps up appearances well whilst there is not much to be endured, but which shrinks away and cowers down if there come a season of trial and persecution. Alas! we are bound to fear that much of the religion which wears a flourishing aspect, which holds up its head bravely, whilst it costs little to make a profession of godliness, would be found deficient in root if a hot sun were to scorch it, or a fierce wind were to batter it. There is nothing uncharitable in the entertaining such fear, for the parable under our review is a prophetic sketch of the several classes in the church, and we must expect its fulfilment in our own days as well as in earlier. And if we could divide this assembly into the several classes, should we not find many who take indeed delight in listening to the word, who have a kind of relish for the gospel, so that they would dislike and oppose unscriptural doctrines, but whose hearts are nevertheless only half on God's side, and would be wholly for the world if a trial came which made decision imperative? Possibly the trial may not be allotted to you, and thus your fellow-men will have no opportunity of detecting the feebleness and heartlessness of what looks vigorous and genuine; but you may detect it for yourselves, and it is to this that we strenuously urge you. You may by a rigorous self-examination understand whether you have a real love to God, whether your delight in hearing the gospel is from a sense of its admirable adaptation to your necessities, whether you can honestly count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and whether, in determining what is lawful and unlawful for you as professors of godliness, your leaning is to the side of denying yourselves whenever there is doubt, not of indulging yourselves where it is just possible that you may not be wrong. And in looking on this assembly, and remembering how easy it is in days when God hath stopped the lion's mouth to deceive one's self as well as others by a religious profession, we cannot but fear that with many

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the reception of the gospel is like that of the seed which fall in stony places. Can it be said of you as of Job, that "the root of the matter" is found in you? Oh! if there came searching and sifting times when you must serve God with surrendered substance and in peril of life, think you, would you be ready to imitate patriarchs, martyrs, and saints, who witnessed a good confession and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods? Or even now, are you not apt to keep religion in the back-ground whenever the avowing it would expose you to ridicule and contempt, and to be ashamed of Christ in every company but that of his professed friends and adherents? Where, then, is the depth of earth whence plants may spring which shall grow till the harvest time? Or, if nothing happen ere ye die to prove the want of root, what likelihood is there that a produce, which the least blast of persecution would have withered, will stand firm and unscathed amid the lightnings and thunders of the judgment. Would to God ye might be prevailed on to examine yourselves whilst the rock may yet be broken and the soil may yet be beaten. Be not content with taking pleasure in the gospel; are you taking pleasure in obeying the gospel? Oh! how easy to be in love with the promises, but how hard to be in love with the precepts of the gospel! Take heed, then, that you deceive not yourselves. For, after all, notwithstanding your delight in public ministrations, you may be only of those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy, but having no root, believe only for a while, and in time of persecution fall away. And tell me, is there anything obscure, anything mystical in these statements to puzzle you or perplex you? Nay, is not all so plain and intelligible that we may justly say to you in the words of our text—"Know ye not this parable! and how then will ye know all parables?"

Now, the third class of hearers—a class of which we have reason to believe is as numerous as the second. The gospel may enter into hearts which are full of worldly cares, just as seed may fall on ground which is overgrown with thorns. That which fell among thorns are they—which is *Christ's* interpretation of the Gospel of St. Luke, who, "when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." They hear, for example, on one or two days in the week, perhaps with great earnestness and delight, but they return with undiminished zeal to their business or their pleasure, and eternity can gain no audience till church going day come round again. And what likelihood is there that any abiding impression will be made when God has only one day and the world all the rest? They are fatally mistaken who think there is time enough on Sundays for the great work of saving the soul. They wilfully deceive themselves who just use a church as a kind of spiritual counting-house, where they are to transact one sort of business which would be out of place in any other. If there be reality in religion, it is an every day thing, found on the exchange as well as in the sanctuary; no more a stranger to the ledger than to the prayer-book. To be religious implies a fixed habit of mind, a settled purpose of heart. It is idle to talk of a fixed habit which is always being suspended, and of a settled purpose which is continually laid aside. With hundreds, yea, thousands in a mercantile community the word is choked, and becometh unfruitful. The Sunday finds them regular in attendance on the ordinances of grace, and as the preacher discourses on the vanity of sublunary good, and shows the folly of wasting time and strength on things which cannot fill

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the soul, and exhorts to the seeking with undivided energy the inheritance which fadeth not away, they will go along with him in all which he advances, assenting to his statements, and applauding his exhortations; and you would think that men who listen so intently, and approve so readily, are sure, in returning to their worldly occupations, to act out the principles thus acknowledged and admired. You would never think, that the very persons to whom a sermon has commended itself by its truth and fidelity, would put contempt on all its tenor when a few hours have elapsed; but you bring not into account how the ground is overgrown with thorns. The seed takes root, for the men are conscious that the salvation of the soul is a work of great urgency, and they profess themselves, they suppose themselves, not neglectful of that work; but immediately afterward they are back in the worldly atmosphere; and then all those brambles of care and desire which could not show themselves in a church, or in the holy and fresh air of a Sabbath morn, shoot up in rank and fatal luxuriance. What is to be expected, but that since they will not plough and prune with an unflinching hand, since they will not at all hazard, keep themselves so disentangled from the earth that the kingdom of God shall be the first thing sought, since—and judge ye whether this apply to any among yourselves—since they will make the experiment of serving two masters, of running the Christian race side by side with those who are walking the broad path of gratifying ambition and yet despising earthly honours—avarice, and yet not loving earthly wealth—the experiment of reconciling opposites, of giving up all for God, and yet giving up little, embracing a religion of self-denial, and yet living a life of self-indulgence, being worldly-minded enough to join eagerly the crowd who seek happiness below, and yet heavenly-minded enough for association with the assembly whose affections whilst on earth are fixed on things above; what we say, is to be expected of men to whom such a description applies? That their spiritual growth will be stunted, that the seed sown in their hearts will be choked by the weed and the thorn that no fruit whatsoever will be brought to perfection. Yes! do not go away ye who suffer religious thoughts and purposes to be kept down and crushed by worldly occupations—do not go away and say that you could not make out what was meant by seed sown among thorns. All this is so simple, though so sad, so plain in its meaning, though so perilous in its results—that we may justly address you with the question of our text—"Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?"

Lastly, though so much of the precious seed is to all appearance wasted, there is some which falls on good ground and rewards the husbandman's toil. There are hearers of the word—and we trust many in the present assembly—who resemble neither the way side, nor the stony places, nor the land overgrown with thorns. These are the men whose heart God hath prepared to receive with meekness the engrafted word, who attend public worship as a divine institution, who expect to receive a message from above through the instrumentality of preaching, and whose fixed purpose it is to make temporal concerns subordinate to eternal, so that they spare not the right hand or the right eye, if it prove a cause of offence to hinder them in godliness. Here you have the honest and good heart with depth enough of soil and cleared of those entanglements which so often cause disappointment to the sower. In these there is a sincere desire to ascertain the will of God, whatever it may

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be, and a steadfast purpose to follow it whatever the cost may be. These—and we trust that many of you answer the description—these come up to the sanctuary to learn what is right, and they go into the world to practise it. The church is to them the place in which they expect through the aids of God's Spirit to be informed in sound doctrine, and life is the scene in which they strive by God's grace to exhibit and adorn that doctrine. And as in this life are produced the fruits of obedience and piety, so in the next shall appear those of glory and immortality. Yes, when the ministers of wrath are passing fiercely over the way side, trampling it down as desecrated soil, when they are gathering from the stony places shrivelled stalks which have no ear and therefore belong not to the garner; when the land, overspread with thorns is yielding perhaps nothing but fuel for the burning, that well tilled ground into which the word of life sank where repentance had broken the clods and sincerity spared not the weeds, and diligence dug deep, and prayer brought down genial rain, and faith hedged out the enemy with his tares, this shall stand thickly with a glorious harvest, and angels shall reap it and God shall approve it. I cannot divide into its several departments this section of the moral field in which God doth set me to labour, and I am thankful that I cannot. It would hamper one's preaching to have the power of making it personal. But if I cannot tell which of you are the way side, which the stony places, which the thorn covered land, I dare not doubt that each class finds examples among you, but neither dare I doubt that the good ground is here also to be met with, and that the wild and barren tracts with which it is intermingled may yet be reclaimed by spiritual husbandry. Read then the parable of the sower. Let each when he goes hence examine fearlessly of what kind of soil he is composed; let each pray—the way side hearer that God's word may be as a hammer to break the rock in pieces; he who receives the seed in stony places that he may be rooted and grounded in love; he who receives it among thorns that he may be careful for nothing but seek first the kingdom of God; and he who receives it into good ground, Oh! let him pray that God may purge him that he may bring forth more fruit. Again, we affirm that there can be nothing plainer, nothing more practical than this parable of the sower, "Know ye not this parable? how then shall ye know all parables?" Every man may find his own case described to the letter. Wonderful as it is, this short parable includes every possible case. Try, and you will find you cannot make a fifth case. Well, then, there can be no excuse if you do not make out your own portrait. Having made it out, set at once to the correcting it, wherever there are bad and menacing lines, and then when the harvest day comes, God grant that you may be all gathered into the granary of the Lord, though the wicked must be bound up as bundles to the burning.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 3, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."—Luke xviii. 13.

THE heroes of our Saviour's stories are most of them selected to illustrate traits of character entirely dissimilar to their general reputation. What would you think of a moral writer of our own day, should he endeavour in a work of fiction, to set before us the gentle virtue of benevolence by the example of a Sepoy? And yet, Jesus Christ has given us one of the finest examples of charity in the case of a Samaritan. To the Jews, a Samaritan was as proverbial for his bitter animosity against their nation, as the Sepoy is among us for his treacherous cruelty, and as much an object of contempt and hatred; but Jesus Christ, nevertheless, chose his hero from the Samaritans, that there should be nothing adventitious to adorn him, but that all the adorning might be given to the grace of charity. Thus, too, in the present instance, our Saviour, being desirous of setting before us the necessity of humiliation in prayer, has not selected some distinguished saint who was famed for his humility, but he has chosen a tax-gatherer, probably one of the most extortionate of his class, for the Pharisee seems to hint as much; and I doubt not he cast his eye askance at this publican, when he observed, with self-gratulation, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." Still, our Lord, in order that we might see that there was nothing to predispose in the person, but that the acceptance of the prayer might stand out, set even in a brighter light by the black foil of the publican's character, has selected this man to be the pattern and model of one who should offer an acceptable prayer unto God. Note that, and you will not be surprised to find the same characteristic exhibited very frequently in the parables of our Lord Jesus Christ. As for this publican, we know but little of his previous career, but we may, without perilling any serious error, conjecture somewhat near the truth. He may have been, and doubtless he was a Jew, piously brought up and religiously trained, but, perhaps like Levi, he ran away from his parents, and finding no other trade exactly suited to his vicious taste, he became one of that corrupt class who collected the Roman taxes, and, ashamed to be known as Levi any longer, he changed his name to Matthew, lest anyone should recognize in the degraded cast of the publican, the man whose parents feared God, and bowed their knees before Jehovah. It may be that this publican had in his youth forsaken the ways of his fathers, and given himself up to lasciviousness, and then found this unworthy occupation to be most accordant with his vicious spirit. We cannot tell how often he had ground the faces of the poor, or how many curses had been spilled upon his head when he had broken into the heritage of the widow, and had robbed the friendless, unprotected orphan. The Roman government gave a publican far greater power than he ought to possess, and he was never slow to use the advantage for his own enrichment. Probably half of all he had was a robbery, if not more, for Zaccheus seems to hint as much in his own instance, when he says—"Behold, Lord,

the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have gotten anything of any man by false accusation, I restore it unto him four-fold." It was not often that this publican troubled the temple; the priests very seldom saw him coming with a sacrifice; it would have been an abomination, and he did not bring it. But so it happened, that the Spirit of the Lord met with the publican; and had made him think upon his ways, and their peculiar blackness: he was full of trouble, but he kept it to himself, pent up in his own bosom; he could scarcely rest at night, nor go about his business by day, for day and night the hand of God was heavy upon him. At last, unable to endure his misery any longer, he thought of that house of God at Zion, and of the sacrifice that was daily offered there. "To whom, or where should I go," said he, "but to God?—and where can I hope to find mercy, but where the sacrifice is offered?" No sooner said than done. He went; his unaccustomed feet bent their steps to the sanctuary, but he is ashamed to enter. Yon Pharisee, holy man as he appeared to be, goes up unblushingly to the court of the Israelites; he goes as near as he dare to the very precincts, within which the priesthood alone might stand; and he prays with boastful language. But as for the publican, he chooses out for himself some secluded corner where he shall neither be seen nor heard, and now he is about to pray, not with uplifted hands as yonder Pharisee, not with eyes turned up to heaven with a sanctimonious gaze of hypocrisy, but fixing his eyes upon the ground, the hot tears streaming from them, not daring to lift them up to heaven. At last his stifled feelings found utterance; yet that utterance was a groan, a short prayer that must all be comprehended in the compass of a sigh: "God be merciful to me a sinner." It is done; he is heard; the angel of mercy registers his pardon; his conscience is at peace; he goes down to his house a happy man, justified rather than the Pharisee, and rejoicing in the justification that the Lord had given to him. Well then, my business this morning is to invite, to urge, to beseech you to do what the publican did, that you may receive what he obtained. There are two particulars upon which I shall endeavour to speak solemnly and earnestly: the first is *confession*; the second is *absolution*.

I. Brethren, let us imitate the publican, first of all in his *CONFESSION*. There has been a great deal of public excitement during the last few weeks and months about the confessional. As for that matter, it is perhaps a mercy that the outward and visible sign of Popery in the Church of England has discovered to its sincere friends the inward and spiritual evil which had long been lurking there. We need not imagine that the confessional, or priestcraft, of which it is merely an offshoot, in the Church of England is any novelty: it has long been there; those of us who are outside her borders have long observed and mourned over it; but now we congratulate ourselves on the prospect that the Church of England herself will be compelled to discover her own evils; and we hope that God may give her grace and strength to cut the cancer out of her own breast before she shall cease to be a Protestant Church, and God shall cast her away as an abhorred thing. This morning, however, I have nothing to do with the confessional. Silly women may go on confessing as long as they like, and foolish husbands may trust their wives if they please to such men as those. Let those that are fools show it; let those that have no sense do as they please about it; but as for myself, I should take the greatest care that neither I nor mine have ought to do with such things. Leaving that, however, we come to personal matters, endeavouring to learn, even from the errors of others, how to act rightly ourselves.

Note the publican's confession; *to whom was it presented?* "God be merciful to me a sinner." Did the publican ever think about going to the priest to ask for mercy, and confessing his sins? The thought may have crossed his mind, but his sin was too great a weight upon his conscience to be relieved in any such way, so he very soon dismissed the idea. "No," saith he, "I feel that my sin is of such a character that none but God can take it away; and even if it were right for me to go and make the confession to my fellow creature, yet I should think it must be utterly unavailing in my case, for my disease is of such a nature, that none but an Almighty Physician ever can remove it." So he directs his confession and his prayer to one place, and to one alone—"God be merciful to me a sinner." And you will note in this confession to God, that it was *secret*: all that you can hear of his confession is just that one word—"a sinner." Do you suppose that was all he confessed? No, beloved, I believe that long before this, the publican had made a confession of all his sins privately, upon his knees in his own house before God. But now, in God's house, all he has to say for man to hear, is—"I am a sinner."

And I counsel you, if ever you make a confession before man, let it be a general one but never a particular one. You ought to confess often to your fellow creatures, that you have been a sinner, but to tell to any man in what respect you have been a sinner, is but to sin over again, and to help your fellow creature to transgress. How filthy must be the soul of that priest who makes his ear a common sewer for the filth of other men's hearts. I cannot imagine even the devil to be more depraved, than the man who spends his time in sitting with his ear against the lips of men and women, who, if they do truly confess, must make him an adept in every vice, and school him in iniquities that he otherwise never could have known. Oh, I charge you never pollute your fellow creature; keep your sin to yourself, and to your God; He cannot be polluted by your iniquity; make a plain and full confession of it before him; but to your fellow creature, add nothing to the general confession—"I am a sinner!"

This confession which he made before God, was *spontaneous*. There was no question put to this man as to whether he were a sinner or no; as to whether he had broken the seventh commandment, or the eighth, or the ninth, or the tenth; no, his heart was full of penitence, and it melted out in this breathing—"God be merciful to me a sinner." They tell us that some people never can make a full confession, except a priest helps them by questions. My dear friends, the very excellence of penitence is lost, and its spell broken, if there be a question asked: the confession is not true and real unless it be spontaneous. The man cannot have felt the weight of sin, who wants somebody to tell him what his sins are. Can you imagine any man with a burden on his back, who, before he groaned under it, wanted to be told that he had got one there? Surely not. The man groans under it, and he does not want to be told—"There it is on your back," he knows it is there. And if, by the questioning of a priest, a full and thorough confession could be drawn from any man or woman, it would be totally useless, totally vain before God, because it is not spontaneous. We must confess our sins, because we cannot help confessing them; it must come out, because we cannot keep it in; like fire in the bones, it seems as if it would melt our very spirits, unless we gave vent to the groaning of our confession before the throne of God. See this publican; you cannot hear the abject full confession that he makes; all that you can hear is his simple acknowledgement that he is a sinner; but that comes spontaneously from his lips; God himself has not to ask him the question, but he comes before the throne, and freely surrenders himself up to the hands of Almighty Justice, confessing that he is a rebel and a sinner. That is the first thing we have to note in his confession—that he made it to God secretly and spontaneously; and all he said openly was that he was "a sinner."

Again: *what did he confess?* He confessed, as our text tells us, that he was a sinner. Now, how suitable is this prayer for us! For is there a lip here present that this confession will not suit—"God be merciful to me a sinner?" Do you say,—"the prayer will suit the harlot, when, after a life of sin, rottenness is in her bones, and she is dying in despair—that prayer suits her lips?" Ay, but my friend, it will suit thy lips and mine too. If thou knowest thine heart, and I know mine, the prayer that will suit her will suit us also. You have never committed the sins which the Pharisee disowned; you have neither been extortionate, nor unjust, nor an adulterer; you have never been even as the publican; but nevertheless the word "sinner" will still apply to you; and you will feel it to be so if you are in a right condition. Remember how much you have sinned against light. It is true the harlot hath sinned more openly than you, but had she such light as you have had? Do you think she had such an early education and such training as you have received? Did she ever receive such checkings of conscience and such guardings of providence, as those which have watched over your career? This much I must confess for myself—I do, and must feel a peculiar heinousness in my own sin, for I sin against light, against conscience, and more, against the love of God received, and against the mercy of God promised. Come forward, thou greatest among saints, and answer this question,—dost not this prayer suit thee? I hear thee answer, without one moment's pause—"Ay, it suits me now; and until I die, my quivering lips must often repeat the petition, 'Lord have mercy upon me a sinner.'" Men and brethren, I beseech you use this prayer to-day, for it must suit you all. Merchant, hast thou no sins of business to confess? Woman, hast thou no household sins to acknowledge? Child of many prayers, hast thou no offence against father and mother to confess? Have we loved the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength; and have we each loved our

neighbour as ourself. Oh, let us close our lips as to any boasting, and when we open them, let these be the first words that escape from them, "I have sinned, O Lord; I have broken thy commandments; Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner." But mark, is it not a strange thing that the Holy Spirit should teach a man to plead his sinnership before the throne of God? One would think that when we come before God we should try to talk a little of our virtues. Who would suppose that when a man was asking for mercy he would say of himself, "I am a sinner?" Why surely reason would prompt him to say, "Lord have mercy upon me; there is some good point about me: Lord have mercy upon me; I am not worse than my neighbours: Lord have mercy upon me; I will try to be better." Is it not against reason, is it not marvelously above reason, that the Holy Spirit should teach a man to urge at the throne of grace, that which seems to be against his plea, the fact that he is a sinner? And yet, dear brethren, if you and I want to be heard, we must come to Christ as sinners. Do not let us attempt to make ourselves better than we are. When we come to God's throne, let us not for one moment seek to gather any of the false jewels of our pretended virtues; rags are the garments of sinners. Confession is the only music that must come from our lips; "God be merciful to me—a sinner;" that must be the only character in which I can pray to God. Now, are there not many here who feel that they are sinners, and are groaning, sighing, and lamenting, because the weight of sin lies on their conscience? Brother, I am glad thou feelest thyself to be a sinner, for thou hast the key of the kingdom in thy hands. Thy sense of sinnership is thy only title to mercy. Come, I beseech thee, just as thou art—thy nakedness is thy only claim on heaven's wardrobe; thy hunger is thy only claim on heaven's granaries; thy poverty is thy only claim on heaven's eternal riches. Come just as thou art, with nothing of thine own, except thy sinfulness, and plead that before the throne—"God be merciful to me a sinner." This is what this man confessed, that he was a sinner, and he pleaded it, making the burden of his confession to be the matter of his plea before God.

Now again, *how does he come?* What is the posture that he assumes? The first thing I would have you notice is that he "stood afar off." What did he do that for? Was it not because he felt himself a separated man? We have often made general confessions in the temple, but there never was a confession accepted, except it was particular, personal, and heartfelt. There were the people gathered together for the accustomed service of worship; they join in a psalm of praise, but the poor publican stood far away from them. Anon, they unite in the order of prayer, still he could not go near them. No, he was come there for himself, and he must stand by himself. Like the wounded hart that seeks the deepest glades of the forest where it may bleed and die alone in profound solitude, so did this poor publican seem to feel he must be alone. You notice he does not say anything about other people in his prayer. "God be merciful to me," he says. He does not say "one of a company of sinners," but "a sinner," as if there were not another sinner in all the world. Mark this, my hearer, that thou must feel thyself solitary and alone, before thou canst ever pray this prayer acceptably. Has the Lord ever picked thee out in a congregation? Has it seemed to you in this Hall as if there were a great black wall round about you, and you were closed in with the preacher and with your God, and as if every shaft from the preacher's bow was levelled at you, and every threatening meant for you, and every solemn upbraiding was an upbraiding for you? If thou hast felt this, I will congratulate thee. No man ever prayed this prayer aright unless he prayed alone; unless he said "God be merciful to me," as a solitary, lonely sinner. "The publican stood afar off."

Note the next thing. "He would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven." That was because he dare not, not because he would not; he would have done it if he dared. How remarkable it is that repentance takes all the daring out of men. We have seen fellows very dare-devils before they were touched by sovereign grace, who have become afterwards, the most trembling and conscientious men with the tenderest conscience that one could imagine. Men who were careless, bragging and defying God, have become as humble as little children, and even afraid to lift their eyes to heaven, though once they sent their oaths and curses there. But why did he not dare to lift his eyes up? It was because he was dejected in his "spirit," so oppressed and burdened that he could not look up. Is that thy case, my friend, this morning? Are you afraid to pray? Do you feel as if you could not hope

that God would have mercy on you ; as if the least gleam of hope was more light than you could possibly bear ; as if your eyes were so used to the darkness of doubt and despondency, that even one stolen ray seemed to be too much for your poor weak vision? Ah ! well, fear not, for happy shall it be for thee; thou art only following the publican in his sad experience now, and the Lord who helps thee to follow him in the confession, shall help thee to rejoice with him in the absolution.

Note what else he did. He smote upon his breast. He was a good theologian ; he was a real doctor of divinity. What did he smite his breast for ? Because he knew where the mischief lay—in his breast. He did not smite upon his brow as some men do when they are perplexed, as if the mistake were in their understanding. Many a man will blame his understanding, while he will not blame his heart, and say, "Well, I have made a mistake; I have certainly been doing wrong, but I am a good-hearted fellow at the bottom." This man knew where the mischief lay, and he smote the right place,

"Here on my heart the burden lies."

He smote upon his breast as if he were angry with himself. He seemed to say, "Oh ! that I could smite thee, my ungrateful heart, the harder, that thou hast loved sin rather than God." He did not do penance, and yet it was a kind of penance upon himself when he smote his breast again and again, and cried "Alas ! alas ! woe is me that I should ever have sinned against my God—" God be merciful to a sinner." Now, can you come to God like this, my dear friend? Oh, let us all draw near to God in this fashion. Thou hast enough, my brother, to make thee stand alone for there have been sins in which thou and I have stood each of us in solitary guilt. There are iniquities known only to ourselves, which we never told to the partner of our own bosom, not to our own parents or brothers, nor yet to the friend with whom we took sweet counsel. If we have sinned thus alone, let us go to our chambers, and confess alone, the husband apart, and the wife apart, the father apart, and the child apart. Let us each one wail for himself. Men and brethren, leave off to accuse one another. Cease from the bickerings of your censoriousness, and from the slanders of your envy. Rebuke yourselves and not your fellows. Rend your own hearts, and not the reputation of your neighbours. Come, let each man now look to his own case, and not to the case of another; let each cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me, as here I stand alone, a sinner." And hast thou not good reason to cast down thine eyes? Does it not seem sometimes too much for us ever to look to heaven again. We have blasphemed God, some of us, and even imprecated curses on our own limbs and eyes ; and when those things come back to our memory we may well be ashamed to look up. Or if we have been preserved from the crime of open blasphemy—how often have you and I forgotten God! how often have we neglected prayer! how have we broken his Sabbaths and left his Bible unread! Surely these things, as they flash across our memory, might constrain us to feel that we cannot lift up so much as our eyes towards heaven. And as for smiting on our breast, what man is there among us that need not do it? Let us be angry with ourselves, because we have provoked God to be angry with us. Let us be in wrath with the sins that have brought ruin upon our souls; let us drag the traitors out, and put them at once to a summary death; they deserve it well; they have been our ruin; let us be their destruction. He smote upon his breast and said, "God, be merciful unto me a sinner."

There is one other feature in this man's prayer, which you must not overlook. *What reason had he to expect that God would have any mercy upon him?* The Greek explains more to us than the English does; and the original word here might be translated—"God be propitiated to me a sinner." There is in the Greek word a distinct reference to the doctrine of atonement. It is not the Unitarian's prayer—"God be merciful to me;" it is more than that—it is the Christian's prayer, "God be propitiated towards me, a sinner." There is, I repeat it, a distinct appeal to the atonement and the mercy-seat in this short prayer. Friend, if we would come before God with our confessions, we must take care that we plead the blood of Christ. There is no hope for a poor sinner apart from the cross of Jesus. We may cry, "God be merciful to me," but the prayer can never be answered apart from the victim offered, the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. When thou hast thine eye upon the mercy-seat, take care to have

thine eye upon the cross too. Remember that the cross is, after all, the mercy-seat; that mercy never was enthroned, until she did hang upon the cross crowned with thorns. If thou wouldst find pardon, go to dark Gethsemane, and see thy Redeemer sweating, in deep anguish, gouts of gore. If thou wouldst have peace of conscience, go to Gabbatha, the pavement, and see thy Saviour's back flooded with a stream of blood. If thou wouldst have the last best rest to thy conscience, go to Golgotha; see the murdered victim as he hangs upon the cross, with hands and feet and side all pierced, as every wound is gaping wide with misery extreme. There can be no hope for mercy apart from the victim offered—even Jesus Christ the Son of God. Oh, come; let us one and all approach the mercy-seat, and plead the blood. Let us each go and say, "Father, I have sinned; but have mercy upon me, through thy Son." Come, drunkard, give me thy hand; we will go together. Harlot, give me thy hand too; and let us likewise approach the throne. And you, professing Christians, come ye also, be not ashamed of your company. Let us come before his presence with many tears, none of us accusing our fellows, but each one accusing himself; and let us plead the blood of Jesus Christ, which speaketh peace and pardon to every troubled conscience.

Careless man, I have a word with thee before I have done on this point. You say, "Well, that is a good prayer, certainly, for a man who is dying. When a poor fellow has the cholera, and sees black death staring him in the face, or when he is terrified and thunderstruck in the time of storm, or when he finds himself amidst the terrible confusion and alarm of a perilous catastrophe or a sudden accident, while drawing near to the gates of death, it is only right that he should say, Lord, have mercy upon me." Ah, friend, the prayer must be suitable to you then, if you are a dying man; it must be suitable to you, for you know not how near you are to the borders of the grave. Oh, if thou didst but understand the frailty of life, and the slipperiness of that poor prop on which thou art resting, thou wouldst say, "Alas for my soul! if the prayer will suit me dying, it must suit me now; for I am dying, even this day, and know not when I may come to the last gasp." "Oh," says one, "I think it will suit a man that has been a very great sinner." Correct, my friend, and therefore, if you knew yourself, it would suit you. You are quite correct in saying, that it won't suit any but great sinners; and if you don't feel yourself to be a great sinner, I know you will never pray it. But there are some here that feel themselves to be what you ought to feel and know that you are. Such will, constrained by grace, use the prayer with an emphasis this morning, putting a tear upon each letter, and a sigh upon each syllable, as they cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." But mark, my friend; thou mayest smile contemptuously on the man that makes this confession, but he shall go from this house justified, while thou shalt go away still in thy sins, without a hope, without a ray of joy to cheer thy unchastened spirit.

II. Having thus briefly described this confession, I comenore briefly still to notice the ABSOLUTION which God gave. Absolution from the lips of man I do believe is little short of blasphemy. There is in the Prayer Book of the Church of England an absolution which is essentially Popish, which I should think must be almost a verbatim extract from the Romish missal. I do not hesitate to say, that there was never anything more blasphemous printed in Holywell Street, than the absolution that is to be pronounced by a clergyman over a dying man; and it is positively frightful to think that any persons calling themselves Christians should rest easy in a church until they have done their utmost to get that most excellent book thoroughly reformed and revised, and to get the Popery purged out of it. But there is such a thing as absolution, my friends, and the publican received it. "He went to his house justified rather than the other." The other had nought of peace revealed to his heart; this poor man had all, and he went to his house justified. It does not say that he went to his house, having eased his mind; that is true, but more: he went to his house "justified." What does that mean? It so happens that the Greek word here used is the one which the apostle Paul always employs to set out the great doctrine of the righteousness of Jesus Christ—even the righteousness which is of God by faith. The fact is, that the moment the man prayed the prayer, every sin he had ever done was blotted out of God's book, so that it did not stand on the record against him; and more, the moment that prayer was heard in heaven, the man was reckoned to be a righteous man. All that Christ did for him was cast about his shoulders to be the robe of his beauty, that moment all the guilt that he had ever committed himself was washed entirely away and

lost for ever. When a sinner believes in Christ, his sins positively cease to be, and what is more wonderful they *all* cease to be, as Kent says in those well known lines—

“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast,
And, O my soul with wonder view,
For sins to come here’s pardon too.”

They are all swept away in one solitary instant; the crimes of many years; extortions, adulteries, or even murder, wiped away in an instant; for you will notice the absolution was instantaneously given. God did not say to the man—“Now you must go and perform some good works, and then I will give you absolution.” He did not say as the Pope does, “Now you must swelter awhile in the fires of Purgatory, and then I will let you out.” No, he justified him there and then; the pardon was given as soon as the sin was confessed. “Go, my son, in peace; I have not a charge against thee; thou art a sinner in thine own estimation, but thou art none in mine; I have taken all thy sins away, and cast them into the depth of the sea, and they shall be mentioned against thee no more for ever.” Can you tell what a happy man the publican was, when all in a moment he was changed? If you may reverse the figure used by Milton, he seemed himself to have been a loathsome toad, but the touch of the Father’s mercy made him rise to angelic brightness and delight; and he went out of that house with his eye upward, no longer afraid. Instead of the groan that was on his heart, he had a song upon his lip. He no longer walked alone; he sought out the godly and he said, “Come and hear, ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul.” He did not smite upon his breast, but he went home to get down his harp, and play upon the strings, and praise his God. You would not have known that he was the same man, if you had seen him going out; and all that was done in a minute. “But,” says one, “do you think he knew for certain that all his sins were forgiven? Can a man know that?” Certainly he can. And there be some here that can bear witness that this is true. They have known it themselves. The pardon which is sealed in heaven is re-sealed in our own conscience. The mercy which is recorded above is made to shed its light into the darkness of our hearts. Yes, a man may know on earth that his sins are forgiven, and may be as sure that he is a pardoned man as he is of his own existence. And now I hear a cry from some one saying, “And may I be pardoned this morning? and may I know that I am pardoned? May I be so pardoned that all shall be forgotten—I who have been a drunkard, a swearer, or what not? May I have all my transgressions washed away? May I be made sure of heaven, and all that in a moment?” Yes, my friend, if thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, if thou wilt stand where thou art, and just breathe this prayer out, “Lord, have mercy! God be merciful to me a sinner, through the blood of Christ.” I tell thee man, God never did deny that prayer yet; if it came out of honest lips he never shut the gates of mercy on it. It is a solemn litany that shall be used as long as time shall last, and it shall pierce the ears of God as long as there is a sinner to use it. Come, be not afraid, I beseech you, use the prayer before you leave this Hall. Stand where you are; endeavour to realize that you are all alone, and if you feel that you are guilty, now let the prayer ascend. Oh, what a marvellous thing, if from the thousands of hearts here present, so many thousand prayers might go up to God! Surely the angels themselves never had such a day in Paradise, as they would have to-day, if every one of us could unfeignedly make that confession. Some are doing it; I know they are; God is helping them. And sinner, do you stay away? You, who have most need to come, do you refuse to join with us. Come, brother come. You say you are too vile. No, brother, you cannot be too vile to say, “God be merciful to me.” Perhaps you are no viler than we are; at any rate, this we can say—we feel ourselves to be viler than you, and we want you to pray the same prayer that we have prayed. “Ah,” says one, “I cannot; my heart won’t yield to that; I cannot.” But friend, if God is ready to have mercy upon thee, thine must be a hard heart, if it is not ready to receive his mercy. Spirit of God, breathe on the hard heart, and melt it now! Help the man who feels that carelessness is overcoming him—help him to get rid of it from this hour. You are struggling against it; you are saying, “Would to God I could pray that I could go back to be a boy or a child again, and then I could; but I have got hardened and grown grey in sin, and prayer would be hypocrisy

in me. No, brother, no, it would not. If thou canst but cry it from thy heart, I beseech thee say it. Many a man thinks he is a hypocrite, when he is not, and is afraid that he is not sincere, when his very fear is a proof of his sincerity. "But," says one, "I have no redeeming trait in my character at all." I am glad you think so; still you may use the prayer, "God be merciful to me." "But it will be a useless prayer," says one. My brother, I assure thee, not in my own name, but in the name of God, my Father and your Father, it shall not be a useless prayer. As sure as God is God, him that cometh unto Christ he will in no wise cast out. Come with me now, I beseech thee; tarry no longer; the bowels of God are yearning over thee. Thou art his child, and he will not give thee up. Thou hast run from him these many years, but he has never forgotten thee; thou hast resisted all his warnings until now, and he is almost weary, but still he has said concerning thee, "How shall I make thee as Admah; how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

"Come humbled sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve;
Come with thy guilt and fear oppressed,
And make this last resolve:

I'll go to Jesus; though my sin
Hath like a mountain rose,
I know his courts; I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.

Prostrate I'll lie before his face,
And there my sins confess;
I'll tell him I'm a wretch undone,
Without his sov'reign grace."

Go home to your houses: let everyone—preacher, deacon, people, ye of the church, and ye of the world, everyone of you, go home, and ere you feast your bodies, pour out your hearts before God, and let this one cry go up from all our lips, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

I pause. Bear with me.

I must detain you a few moments. Let us use this prayer as our own now. Oh that it might come up before the Lord at this time as the earnest supplication of every heart in this assembly! I will repeat it,—not as a text, but as a prayer,—as my own prayer; as your prayer. Will each one of you take it personally for himself? Let everyone, I entreat you, who desires to offer the prayer, and can join in it, utter at its close an audible "Amen."

Let us pray.

"GOD-BE-MERCIFUL-TO-ME-A-SINNER."

[*And the people did with deep solemnity say*] "AMEN."

P.S.—The preacher hopes that he who reads will feel constrained most solemnly to do likewise.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

DECLENSION FROM FIRST LOVE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."—Revelation ii. 4.

It is a great thing to have as much said in our commendation as was said concerning the church at Ephesus. Just read what "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness," said of them—"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, we may feel devoutly thankful if we can humbly, but honestly say, that this commendation applies to us. Happy the man whose works are known and accepted of Christ. He is no idle Christian, he has practical godliness; he seeks by works of piety to obey God's whole law, by works of charity to manifest his love to the brotherhood, and by works of devotion to show his attachment to the cause of his Master. "I know thy works." Alas! some of you cannot get so far as that. Jesus Christ himself can bear no witness to your works, for you have not done any. You are Christians by profession, but you are not Christians as to your practice. I say again, happy is that man to whom Christ can say, "I know thy works." It is a commendation worth a world to have as much as that said of us. But further, Christ said, "and thy labour." This is more still. Many Christians have works, but only few Christians have labour. There were many preachers in Whitfield's day that had works, but Whitfield had labour. He toiled and travailed for souls. He was "in labours more abundant." Many were they in the apostle's days who did works for Christ; but pre-eminently the apostle Paul did labour for souls. It is not work merely, it is anxious work; it is casting forth the whole strength, and exercising all the energies for Christ. Could the Lord Jesus say as much as that of you—"I know thy labour?" No. He might say, "I know thy loitering; I know thy laziness; I know thy shirking of the work; I know thy boasting of what little thou dost; I know thine ambition to be thought something of, when thou art nothing." But ah! friends, it is more than most of us dare to hope that Christ could say, "I know thy labour."

But further, Christ says, "I know thy patience." Now there be some that labour, and they do it well. But what does hinder them? They only labour for a little season, and then they cease to work and begin to faint. But this church had laboured on for many years; it had thrown out all its energies—not in some spasmodic effort, but in a continual strain and unabated zeal for the glory of God. "I know thy patience." I say again, beloved, I tremble to think how few out of this congregation could win such praise as this. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil." The thorough hatred which the church had of evil doctrine, of evil practice, and its corresponding intense love for pure truth and pure practice—in that I trust some of us can bear a part. "And thou hast tried them which

say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." Here, too, I think some of us may hope to be clear. I know the difference between truth and error. Arminianism will never go down with us; the doctrine of men will not suit our taste. The husks, the bran, and the chaff, are not things that we can feed upon. And when we listen to those who preach another gospel, a holy anger burns within us, for we love the truth as it is in Jesus; and nothing but that will satisfy us. "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." They had borne persecutions, difficulties, hardships, embarrassments, and discouragements, yet had they never flagged, but always continued faithful. Who among us here present could lay claim to so much praise as this? What Sunday-school teacher have I here who could say, "I have laboured, and I have borne, and have had patience, and have not fainted." Ah, dear friends, if you can say it, it is more than I can. Often have I been ready to faint in the Master's work; and though I trust I have not been tired of it, yet there has sometimes been a longing to get from the work to the reward, and to go from the service of God, before I had fulfilled, as a hireling, my day. I am afraid we have not enough of patience, enough of labour, and enough of good works, to get even as much as this said of us. But it is in our text, I fear the mass of us must find our character. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." There may be a preacher here present. Did you ever hear of a minister who had to preach his own funeral sermon? What a labour that must have been, to feel that he had been condemned to die, and must preach against himself, and condemn himself! I stand here to-night, not in that capacity, but in one somewhat similar. I feel that I who preach shall this night condemn myself; and my prayer before I entered this pulpit was, that I might fearlessly discharge my duty, that I might deal honestly with my own heart, and that I might preach, knowing myself to be the chief culprit, and you each in your measure to have offended in this respect, even though none of you so grievously as I have done. I pray that God the Holy Spirit, through his renewings, may apply the word, not merely to your hearts, but to mine, that I may return to my first love, and that you may return with me.

In the first place, *what was our first love?* Secondly, *how did we lose it?* And thirdly, *let me exhort you to get it again.*

I. First, **WHAT WAS OUR FIRST LOVE?** Oh, let us go back—it is not many years with some of us. We are but youngsters in God's ways, and it is not so long with any of you that you will have very great difficulty in reckoning it. Then if you are Christians, those days were so happy that your memory will never forget them, and therefore you can easily return to that first bright spot in your history. Oh, what love was that which I had to my Saviour the first time he forgave my sins. I remember it. You remember each for yourselves, I dare say, that happy hour when the Lord appeared to us, bleeding on his cross, when he seemed to say, and did say in our hearts, "I am thy salvation; I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins." Oh, how I loved him! Passing all loves except his own was that love which I felt for him then. If beside the door of the place in which I met with him there had been a stake of blazing faggots, I would have stood upon them without chains; glad to give my flesh, and blood, and bones, to be ashes that should testify my love to him. Had he asked me then to give all my substance to the poor, I would have given all and thought myself to be amazingly rich in having beggared myself for his name's sake. Had he commanded me then to preach in the midst of all his foes, I could have said:—

"There's not a lamb amongst thy flock
I would disdain to feed,
There's not a foe before whose face
I'd fear thy cause to plead."

I could realize then the language of Rutherford, when he said, being full of love to Christ, once upon a time, in the dungeon of Aberdeen—"Oh, my Lord, if there were a broad hell betwixt me and thee, if I could not get at thee except by wading through it, I would not think twice but I would plunge through it all, if I might embrace thee and call thee mine."

Now it is that first love that you and I must confess I am afraid we have in a measure lost. Let us just see whether we have it. When we first loved the Saviour,

how earnest we were; there was not a single thing in the Bible, that we did not think most precious; there was not one command of his that we did not think to be like fine gold and choice silver. Never were the doors of his house open without our being there. if there were a prayer meeting at any hour in the day we were there. Some said of us that we had no patience, we would do too much and expose our bodies too frequently—but we never thought of that. "Do thyself no harm," was spoken in our ears; but we would have done anything then. Why there are some of you who cannot walk to the Music Hall on a morning, it is too far. When you first joined the church, you would have walked twice as far. There are some of you who cannot be at the prayer meeting—business will not permit; yet when you were first baptized, there was never a prayer meeting from which you were absent. It is the loss of your first love that makes you seek the comfort of your bodies instead of the prosperity of your souls. Many have been the young Christians who have joined this church, and old ones too, and I have said to them, "Well, have you got a ticket for a seat?" "No, sir." "Well, what will you do? Have you got a preference ticket?" "No, I cannot get one; but I do not mind standing in the crowd an hour, or two hours. I will come at five o'clock so that I can get in. Sometimes I don't get in, sir; but even then I feel that I have done what I ought to do in attempting to get in." "Well," but I have said, "you live five miles off, and there is coming and going back twice a day—you cannot do it." "Oh, sir," they have said "I can do it; I feel so much the blessedness of the Sabbath and so much enjoyment of the presence of the Saviour." I have smiled at them; I could understand it, but I have not felt it necessary to caution them—and now their love is cool enough. That first love does not last half so long as we could wish. Some of you stand convicted even here; you have not that blazing love, that burning love, that ridiculous love as the worldling would call it, which is after all the love to be most coveted and desired. No, you have lost your first love in that respect. Again, how obedient you used to be. If you saw a commandment, that was enough for you—you did it. But now you see a commandment, and you see profit on the other side; and how often do you dally with the profit and choose the temptation, instead of yielding an unsullied obedience to Christ.

Again, how happy you used to be in the ways of God. Your love was of that happy character that you could sing all day long; but now your religion has lost its lustre, the gold has become dim; you know that when you come to the Sacramental table, you often come there without enjoying it. There was a time when every bitter thing was sweet; whenever you heard the Word, it was all precious to you. Now you can grumble at the minister. Alas! the minister has many faults, but the question is, whether there has not been a greater change in you than there has been in him. Many there are who say, "I do not hear Mr. So-and-so as I used to,"—when the fault lies in their own ears. Oh, brethren, when we live near to Christ, and are in our first love, it is amazing what a little it takes to make a good preacher to us. Why, I confess I have heard a poor illiterate Primitive Methodist preach the gospel, and I felt as if I could jump for joy all the while I was listening to him, and yet he never gave me a new thought or a pretty expression, nor one figure that I could remember, but he talked about Christ; and even his common things were to my hungry spirit like dainty meats. And I have to acknowledge, and, perhaps, you have to acknowledge the same—that I have heard sermons from which I ought to have profited, but I have been thinking of the man's style, or some little mistakes in grammar. When I might have been holding fellowships with Christ in and through the ministry, I have, instead thereof, been getting abroad in my thoughts even to the ends of the earth. And what is the reason of this, but that I have lost my first love.

Again: when we were in our first love, what would we do for Christ; now how little will we do. Some of the actions which we performed when we were young Christians, but just converted, when we look back upon them, seem to have been wild and like idle tales. You remember when you were a lad and first came to Christ, you had a half-sovereign in your pocket; it was the only one you had, and you met with some poor saint and gave it all away. You did not regret that you had done it, your only regret was that you had not a great deal more, for you would have given all. You recollected that something was wanted for the cause of Christ. Oh! we could give anything away when we first loved the Saviour. If there was a preaching to be held five miles off, and we could walk with the lay-

preacher to be a little comfort to him in the darkness, we were off. If there was a Sunday-school, however early it might be, we would be up, so that we might be present. Unheard-of feats, things that we now look back upon with surprise, we could perform them. Why cannot we do them now? Do you know there are some people who always live upon what they have been. I speak very plainly now. There is a brother in this church who may take it to himself; I hope he will. It is not very many years ago since he said to me, when I asked him why he did not do something—"Well, I have done my share; I used to do this, and I have done the other; I have done so-and-so." Oh, may the Lord deliver him, and all of us, from living on "has beens!" It will never do to say we have done a thing. Suppose, for a solitary moment, the world should say, "I have turned round; I will stand still." Let the sea say, "I have been ebbing and flowing, lol these many years; I will ebb and flow no more." Let the sun say, "I have been shining, and I have been rising and setting so many days; I have done this enough to earn me a goodly name; I will stand still;" and let the moon wrap herself up in veils of darkness, and say, "I have illuminated many a night, and I have lighted many a weary traveller across the moors; I will shut up my lamp and be dark for ever." Brethren, when you and I cease to labour, let us cease to live. God has no intention to let us live a useless life. But mark this; when we leave our first works, there is no question about our having lost our first love; that is sure. If there be strength remaining, if there be still power mentally and physically, if we cease from our office, if we abstain from our labours, there is no solution of this question which an honest conscience will accept, except this, "Thou hast lost thy first love, and, therefore, thou hast neglected thy first works." Ah! we were all so very ready to make excuse for ourselves. Many a preacher has retired from the ministry, long before he had any need to do so. He has married a rich wife. Somebody has left him a little money, and he can do without it. He was growing weak in the ways of God, or else he would have said,

"My body with my charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live."

And let any man here present who was a Sunday-school teacher and who has left it, who was a tract distributor and who has given it up, who was active in the way of God but is now idle, stand to-night before the bar of his conscience, and say whether he be not guilty of this charge which I bring against him, that he has lost his first love.

I need not stop to say also, that this may be detected in the closet as well as in our daily life; for when first love is lost, there is a want of that prayerfulness which we have. I remember the day I was baptized, I was up at three o'clock in the morning. Till six, I spent in prayer, wrestling with God. Then I had to walk some eight miles, and started off and walked to the baptism. Why, prayer was a delight to me then. My duties at that time kept me occupied pretty well from five o'clock in the morning till ten at night, and I had not a moment for retirement, yet I would be up at four o'clock to pray; and though I feel very sleepy now-a-days, and I feel that I could not be up to pray, it was not so then, when I was in my first love. Somehow or other, I never lacked time then. If I did not get it early in the morning, I got it late at night. I was compelled to have time for prayer with God; and what prayer it was! I had no need then to groan because I could not pray; for love, being fervent, I had sweet liberty at the throne of grace. But when first love departs, we begin to think that ten minutes will do for prayer, instead of an hour, and we read a verse or two in the morning, whereas we used to read a portion, but never used to go into the world without getting some marrow and fatness. Now, business has so increased, that we must get into bed as soon as we can; we have not time to pray. And then at dinner time, we used to have a little time for communion; that is dropped. And then on the Sabbath-day, we used to make it a custom to pray to God when we got home from his house, for just five minutes before dinner, so that what we heard we might profit by; that is dropped. And some of you that are present were in the habit of retiring for prayer when you went home; your wives have told that story; the messengers have heard it when they have called at your houses, when they have asked the wife—"What is your husband?" "Ah!" she has said, "he is a godly man; he cannot come home to his breakfast but he must alip upstairs alone. I know what he is

doing—he is praying. Then when he is at table, he often says—"Mary, I have had a difficulty to-day, we must go and have a word or two of prayer together." And some of you could not take a walk without prayer, you were so fond of it you could not have too much of it. Now where is it? You know more than you did; you have grown older; you have grown richer, perhaps. You have grown wiser in some respects; but you might give up all you have got, to go back to

"Those peaceful hours you once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!"

Oh, what would you give if you could fill

"That aching void,
The world can never fill,"

but which only the same love that you had at first, can ever fully satisfy!

II. And now, beloved, WHERE DID YOU AND I LOSE OUR FIRST LOVE, if we have lost it? Let each one speak for himself, or rather, let me speak for each.

Have you not lost your first love in the world some of you? You used to have that little shop once, you had not very much business; well, you had enough, and a little to spare. However, there was a good turn came in business; you took two shops, and you are getting on very well. Is it not marvellous, that when you grew richer and had more business, you began to have less grace?

Oh, friends, it is a very serious thing to grow rich? Of all the temptations to which God's children are exposed it is the worst, because it is one that they do not dread, and therefore it is the more subtle temptation. You know a traveller, if he is going a journey, takes a staff with him, it is a help to him; but suppose he is covetous, and says, "I will have a hundred of these sticks," that will be no help to him at all; he has only got a load to carry, and it stops his progress instead of assisting him. But I do believe there are many Christians that lived near to God, when they were living on a pound a week, that might give up their yearly incomes with the greatest joy, if they could have now the same contentment, the same peace of mind, the same nearness of access to God, that they had in times of poverty. Ah, too much of the world is a bad thing for any man! I question very much whether a man ought not sometimes to stop, and say, "There is an opportunity of doing more trade, but it will require the whole of my time, and I must give up that hour I have set apart for prayer; I will not do the trade at all; I have enough, and therefore let it go. I would rather do trade with heaven than trade with earth."

Again: do you not think also that perhaps you may have lost your first love by getting too much with worldly people? When you were in your first love, no company suited you but the godly; but now you have got a young man that you talk with, who talks a great deal more about frivolity, and gives you a great deal more of the froth and scum of levity, than he ever gives you of solid godliness. Once you were surrounded by those that fear the Lord, but now you dwell in the tents of "Freedom," where you hear little but cursing. But, friends, he that carrieth coals in his bosom must be burned; and he that hath ill companions cannot but be injured. Seek, then, to have godly friends, that thou mayest maintain thy first love.

But another reason. Do you not think that perhaps you have forgotten how much you owe to Christ? There is one thing, that I feel from experience I am compelled to do very often, viz., to go back to where I first started:—

"I, the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

You and I get talking about our being saints; we know our election, we rejoice in our calling, we go on to sanctification; and we forget the hole of the pit whence we were digged. Ah, remember my brother, thou art nothing now but a sinner saved through grace; remember what thou wouldst have been, if the Lord had left thee. And surely, then, by going back continually to first principles, and to the great foundation stone, the cross of Christ, thou wilt be led to go back to thy first love.

Dost thou not think, again, that thou hast lost thy first love by neglecting communion with Christ? Now preacher, preach honestly, and preach at thyself. Has there not been, sometimes, this temptation to do a great deal for Christ, but not to live a great deal with Christ? One of my besetting sins, I feel, is this. If there is anything to be done actively for Christ, I instinctively prefer the active exercise to the passive quiet of his presence. There are some of you, perhaps, that are attending a Sunday school, who would be more profitably employed to your own souls if you were spending that hour in communion with Christ. Perhaps, too, you attend the means so often, that you have no time in secret to improve what you gain in the means. Mrs. Bury once said, that if "all the twelve apostles were preaching in a certain town, and we could have the privilege of hearing them preach, yet if they kept us out of our closets, and led us to neglect prayer, better for us never to have heard their names, than to have gone to listen to them." We shall never love Christ much except we live near to him. Love to Christ is dependent on our nearness to him. It is just like the planets and the sun. Why are some of the planets cold? Why do they move at so slow a rate? Simply because they are so far from the sun: put them where the planet Mercury is, and they will be in a boiling heat, and spin round the sun in rapid orbits. So, beloved, if we live near to Christ, we cannot help loving him: the heart that is near Jesus must be full of his love. But when we live days and weeks and months without personal intercourse, without real fellowship, how can we maintain love towards a stranger? He must be a friend, and we must stick close to him, as he sticks close to us—closer than a brother; or else, we shall never have our first love.

There are a thousand reasons that I might have given, but I leave each of you to search your hearts, to find out why you have lost, each of you, your first love.

III. Now, dear friends, just give me all your attention for a moment, while I earnestly beseech and implore of you to SEEK TO GET YOUR FIRST LOVE RESTORED. Shall I tell you why? Brother, though thou be a child of God, if thou hast lost thy first love, there is some trouble near at hand. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth," and he is sure to chasten thee when thou sinnest. It is calm with you to night, is it? Oh! but dread that calm, there is a tempest lowering. Sin is the harbinger of tempest: read the history of David. All David's life, in all his troubles, even in the rocks of the wild goats, and in the caves of Engedi, he was the happiest of men till he lost his first love; and from the day when his lustful eye was fixed upon Bathsheba, even to the last, he went with broken bones sorrowing to his grave. It was one long string of afflictions: take heed it be not so with thee. "Ah, but," you say, "I shall not sin as David did." Brother, you cannot tell: if you have lost your first love, what should hinder you but that you should lose your first purity? Love and purity go together. He that loveth is pure; he that loveth little shall find his purity decrease, until it becomes marred and polluted. I should not like to see you, my dear friends, tried and troubled: I do weep with them that weep. If there be a child of yours sick, and I hear of it, I can say honestly, I do feel something like a father to your children, and as a father to you. If you have sufferings and afflictions, and I know them, I desire to feel for you, and spread your griefs before the throne of God. Oh, I do not want my heavenly Father to take the rod out to you all; but he will do it, if you fall from your first love. As sure as ever he is a Father, he will let you have the rod if your love cools. Bastards may escape the rod. If you are only base-born professors you may go happily along; but the true-born child of God, when his love declines, must and shall smart for it.

There is yet another thing, my dear friends, if we lose our first love—what will the world say of us if we lose our first love? I must put this, not for our name's sake, but for God's dear name's sake. O what will the world say of us? There was a time, and it is not gone yet, when men must point at this church, and say of it, "There is a church, that is like a bright oasis in the midst of a desert, a spot of light in the midst of darkness." Our prayer meetings were prayer meetings indeed, the congregations were as attentive as they were numerous. Oh, how you did drink in the words; how your eyes flashed with a living fire, whenever the name of Christ was mentioned! And what, if in a little time it shall be said, "Ah, that church is quite as sleepy as any other; look at them when the minister preaches, why they can sleep under him, they do not seem to care for the truth. Look at the Spurgeonites, they are just as cold and careless as others; they used to be called the most pugnacious people in the world, for they were

always ready to defend their Master's name and their Master's truth, and they got that name in consequence, but now you may swear in their presence and they will not rebuke you: how near these people once used to live to God and his house, they were always there; look at their prayer meetings, they would fill their seats as full at a prayer meeting as at an ordinary service; now they are all gone back." "Ah," says the world, "just what I said; the fact is, it was a mere spasm, a little spiritual excitement, and it has all gone down." And the worldling says, "Ah, ah, so would I have it, so would I have it!" I was reading only the other day of an account of my ceasing to be popular; it was said my chapel was now nearly empty, that nobody went to it: and I was exceedingly amused and interested. "Well, if it come to that," I said, "I shall not grieve or cry very much; but if it is said the church has left its zeal and first love, that is enough to break any honest pastor's heart." Let the chaff go, but if the wheat remain we have comfort. Let those who are the outer-court worshippers cease to hear, what signifieth? let them turn aside, but O, ye soldiers of the Cross, if ye turn your backs in the day of battle, where shall I hide my head? what shall I say for the great name of my Master, or for the honour of his gospel? It is our boast and joy, that the old-fashioned doctrine has been revived in these days, and that the truth that Calvin preached, that Paul preached, and that Jesus preached, is still mighty to save, and far surpasses in power all the neologies and new-fangled notions of the present time. But what will the heretic say, when he sees it is all over? "Ah," he will say, "that old truth urged on by the fanaticism of a foolish young man, did wake the people a little; but it lacked marrow and strength, and it all died away!" Will ye thus dishonour your Lord and Master, ye children of the heavenly king? I beseech you do not so—but endeavour to receive again as a rich gift of the Spirit your first love.

And now, once again, dear friends, there is a thought that ought to make each of us feel alarmed, if we have lost our first love. May not this question arise in our hearts—Was I ever a child of God at all? Oh, my God, must I ask myself this question? Yes, I will. Are there not many of whom it is said, they went out from us because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us? Are there not some whose goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew—may that not have been my case? I am speaking for you all. Put the question—may I not have been impressed under a certain sermon, and may not that impression have been a mere carnal excitement? May it not have been that I thought I repented but did not really repent? May it not have been the case, that I got a hope somewhere but had not a right to it? And I never had the loving faith that unites me to the Lamb of God. And may it not have been that I only thought I had love to Christ, and never had it, for if I really had love to Christ should I be as I now am? See how far I have come down! may I not keep on going down until my end shall be perdition, and the never-dying worm, and the fire unquenchable? Many have gone from heights of a profession to the depths of damnation, and may not I be the same? May it not be true of me that I am as a wandering star for whom is reserved blackness of darkness for ever? May I not have shone brightly in the midst of the church for a little while, and yet may I not be one of those poor foolish virgins who took no oil in my vessel with my lamp, and therefore my lamp will go out? Let me think, if I go on as I am, it is impossible for me to stop, if I am going downwards I may go on going downwards. And O my God, if I go on backsliding for another year—who knows where I may have backslidden to? Perhaps into some gross sin. Prevent, prevent it by thy grace! Perhaps I may backslide totally. If I am a child of God I know I cannot do that. But still, may it not happen that I only thought I was a child of God, and may I not so far go back that at last my very name to live shall go because I always have been dead? Oh! how dreadful it is to think and to see in our church, members who turn out to be dead members! If I could weep tears of blood, they would not express the emotion that I ought to feel, and that you ought to feel, when you think there are some among us that are dead branches of a living vine. Our deacons find that there is much of unsoundness in our members. I grieve to think that because we cannot see all our members, there are many who have backslidden. There is one who says, "I joined the church, it is true, but I never was converted. I made a profession of being converted, but I was not, and now I take no delight in the things of God. I am moral, I attend the house of prayer, but I am not converted. My name may be taken off the

DECLENSION FROM FIRST LOVE.

books; I am not a godly man." There are others among you who perhaps have gone even further than that—have gone into sin, and yet I may not know it. It may not come to my ears in so large a church as this. Oh! I beseech you, my dear friends, by him that liveth and was dead, let not your good be evil spoken of, by losing your first love.

Are there some among you that are *professing* religion, and not *possessing* it? Oh, give up your profession, or else get the truth and sell it not. Go home, each of you, and cast yourselves on your faces before God, and ask him to search you, and try you, and know your ways, and see if there be any evil way in you, and pray that he may lead you in the way everlasting. And if hitherto you have only professed, but have not possessed, seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call ye upon him while he is near. Ye are warned, each one of you; you are solemnly told to search yourselves and make short work of it. And if any of you be hypocrites, at God's great day, guilty as I may be in many respects, there is one thing I am clear of—I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I do not believe that any people in the world shall be damned more terribly than you shall if you perish; for of this thing I have not shunned to speak—the great evil of making a profession without being sound at heart. No, I have even gone so near to personality, that I could not have gone further without mentioning your names. And rest assured, God's grace being with me, neither you nor myself shall be spared in the pulpit in any personal sin that I may observe in any one of you. But oh, do let us be sincere! May the Lord sooner split this church till only a tenth of you remain, than ever suffer you to be multiplied a hundred-fold unless you be multiplied with the living in Zion, and with the holy flock that the Lord himself hath ordained, and will keep unto the end. To-morrow morning, we shall meet together and pray, that we may have our first love restored; and I hope many of you will be found there to seek again the love which you have almost lost.

And as for you that never had that love at all, the Lord breathe it upon you now for the love of Jesus. Amen.

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THE REV. T. BINNEY IN AUSTRALIA.

A SKETCH OF THE GREAT POPULAR DEMONSTRATIONS,
WITH A PEN AND INK PORTRAIT,
AND MR. BINNEY'S RETURN TO ENGLAND.

It will be in the recollection of most people who take an interest in ecclesiastical movements and persons, that the Rev. Thomas Binney, the highly-esteemed Pastor of the Congregational Church assembling in the Weigh House Chapel, London, the leading Nonconformist preacher of England, and the author of one book, amongst others, that has obtained an almost universal circulation, left his flock some twelve months ago and embarked on a voyage to Australia. The immediate cause of his undertaking this long journey was understood to be enfeebled health, demanding cessation for a while from the wearying work inseparable from the office of a popular metropolitan minister; but, doubtless, several other reasons united with the necessity for a change, and the hope of restored vigour, to induce Mr. Binney to visit Australia in preference to any other part of the world. To say nothing of the presence in the city of Melbourne of a beloved son, it may be remarked for the benefit of those unacquainted with the fact, that the Colonial Missionary Society owes its existence to Mr. Binney, and that from the hour of its birth onwards, year by year, he uniformly manifested towards it the solicitude and care of an affectionate parent. One proof of this is, that the largest congregational collections received by the committee for its support have always been gathered at the Weigh House. It was according to the order of nature, therefore, that Mr. Binney should desire to visit the colony to which the efforts of the Society have been, for a good while past, mainly directed, and where its greatest successes have been achieved. A few years ago, a special endeavour was made by the Colonial Society,—if not at Mr. Binney's suggestion, with his zealous help,—to furnish Ministers of the Congregational Body to meet the augmented spiritual wants of the Colony of Victoria, consequent upon the great influx of people from all quarters of the world, but chiefly from the United Kingdom, drawn thither by the discovery of gold,

“^{yellow and cold,}
Hard to get, but light to hold”—

and the effort has proved signally, and beyond expectation successful. At a very early date in the history of the Australian Colonies a few stray ministers of the gospel had been sent out from the Independent Churches of England, and never failed, we believe, to make themselves individually, a name and a power in the land of their adoption; and in concert with the ministers of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland they helped to sow there seeds of truth regarding the scriptural relation of Church and State which have now happily sprung up and taken a firm root throughout all those regions. Abundant encouragement was consequently supplied by the past to the friends of the Society for extending their evangelizing enterprise in those distant

MR. BINNEY IN SYDNEY.

countries, evidently destined to become great nations, and certain to develop the kind of religious education imparted to them in the days of their youth.

The principle acted upon by the prudent and far-seeing founders of the Society was to obtain as their agents the best men they could possibly secure,—morally unspotted, and of well-furnished minds. Great, however, was the outcry made by the selfish portion of the congregations at home against the taking away to the other side of the world men, who were useful and esteemed in their English spheres of labour. But, said the cosmopolitan advocates of colonial interests, these are the only men likely to make their way, and be of real service, at the antipodes; and so extensively did their arguments prevail, that in process of time quite a number of English and Scottish fellowships had to provide themselves with new pastors. Among the best known of the ministers who consented to go to Australia, under the auspices of the Colonial Society, were the Rev. Richard Fletcher, and the Rev. J. L. Poore, both of Manchester; and the fact of their emigration has operated to the drawing after them of some twenty other ministers of the same denomination, for Mr. Poore having made a tour of the three provinces, consented to the request made to him by the colonial ministers to return to England for the purpose of recruiting their numbers to the utmost possible extent. Mr. Binney naturally took a very lively interest in the mission of his friend Mr. Poore, and on that gentleman's return, it was arranged that the Weigh-House pastor, whose nervous system had become severely shaken by a protracted doctrinal controversy, bitter, and very personal in some of its aspects, should accompany him. His English admirers were fearful of his intention never to return, especially those who learned that he had given up his house before starting, and found it subsequently converted into a School for Girls; but it now appears that their apprehensions were groundless, and that in the good providence of God he will in a few months, at furthest, set foot once more on the shores of England.

As everybody foresaw, who knew Mr. Binney, and remembered the extent to which the Australian Colonies are peopled by English men and women, to whom the name and works of the great English preacher must be perfectly known, he has been the most popular man in Australia ever since the day of his landing, and will remain so till he departs. Under such circumstances, it is especially pleasing to be informed that from the first Mr. Binney's health had greatly improved; so much so, that he was able to preach frequently to overwhelming congregations, and to address a number of large public meetings, as well as take part in others of a more private but not less useful and important nature. The *Sydney Morning Herald* says, that some expectation was entertained that Mr. Binney might be induced to remain in Sydney for a few years, and efforts in that direction were made, but to no purpose. The *Herald* adds, "His visit to Moreton Bay was attended with the happiest results; and he also touched at Newcastle and Maitland on his return. Considerable respect has been paid to the reverend gentleman by the *élite* of our city, and also by the clergy and members of other denominations as well as his own. Mr. and Mrs. Binney leave in the *Emu* for Melbourne. After a short stay there, they go on to Adelaide; afterwards cross over to Tasmania; and subsequently return to Sydney. Here they remain a few weeks, and finally will proceed to England, *via* India, by one of the mail steamers."

MR. BINNEY IN SYDNEY.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* from which we have just quoted, contains a descriptive article of Mr. Binney, and of a Sermon preached by him soon after his arrival. It is written in a high flown and stilted style, but is nevertheless not destitute of much interest.—"About two months ago," says the *Herald*, "in the list of passengers brought to Sydney by one of the Melbourne steamboats appeared a name too famous to be carelessly passed by, amid the great unknown. It was only the name of a Dissenting minister, yet it excited more notice than would have done the most aristocratic to be found in Burke's Peerage. Hundreds, of all classes of religious opinions, were proud

THE PREACHER IN THE PULPIT.

to know that the Rev. Thomas Binney—one of the greatest of living preachers—had arrived in Sydney; though they might be grieved to learn that illness was the cause of this to them unexpected pleasure. Many living among us had listened to that eloquent voice in dear old Fatherland, and thousands who had never enjoyed the privilege of having heard his glowing and manly utterances, anticipated with equal delight the probability of seeing and hearing the well-known pastor of Weigh House Chapel, London. It was indeed hinted by some who laid claim to authentic intelligence, that it was just possible the rev. gentleman might leave our shores without once speaking in public. The sorrows awakened by these rumours was, however, fully dispelled by a public announcement of Mr. Binney's being engaged to preach on the evening of May the 9th, in the Congregational Church, Pitt Street. We determined, barring accidents, (to use an Irishism,) to be there; and so it came to pass that on the aforesaid evening we found ourselves at 'meeting,' surrounded by the *élite* of Sydney. Fearing a crush, we determined to take time by the forelock; but though the doors had been opened only a few minutes before our arrival, we found the church nearly full, and long before the time announced for commencing Divine service the spacious edifice was literally crammed from roof to floor. Such a congregation, we should fancy, both with respect to numbers and power of appreciating the lofty thought and eloquent illustration, has seldom been looked down upon from any colonial pulpit."

THE PREACHER IN THE PULPIT.

"Punctually at seven the preacher commenced the service! As he gave out the Hundredth Psalm every eye was fixed on the noble head, and all intuitively, felt a master mind was before them. Some of his old friends had noted with grief, as he came from the vestry, the heavy stoop of the shoulders, so different from days of yore, when the fine form stood proudly erect, and when the giant Northumbrian could have led the guards who charged at Waterloo; but pain gave place to joy when they heard the manly voice firm as ever, and like the music of their home, heard in a far off land, sounded now in their ears, the northern burr, and the old familiar lisp. When the dense mass stood up and joined in the Old Hundred the effect was thrilling, and one understood the fondness of the children of the Puritans for their Congregational Psalmody, almost destitute as it is of every pretension to melody. We have often wondered, when listening to the noise in Protestant churches which goes by the name of singing, how good, clear-headed men can, in a service which should appeal to the whole nature of man, not only ignore the æsthetic, but actually employ an instrumentality which, to every man of taste and culture, must be an abomination; and, what is still stranger, that young men and women, to whom Handel, Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Beethoven are not unknown, should voluntarily submit to it. It might have been old associations acting upon us, for Mr. Binney's reading the Scriptures, though natural, is not of the highest order like that of the grand Edward Irving, yet seldom to us have the words of Holy Writ come so powerfully as when our preacher read the lesson of the evening. Lead by him, we knelt. Once again we were in the King's Weigh House. The same quiet beauty, simplicity, and scripturalness as of old, and the petitions were so *human*; we men and women, struggling for more than life with cares and sins, and earthliness, felt that living satans were being prayed against. And the spirit of prayer how blessed; humble as the penitent Magdalene, confident as the request of the first-born, and tender as the light of a star."

A PEN AND INK PORTRAIT.

"Now comes the sermon; but while the preacher is slowly adjusting his glasses to enable him to read his text let us try if we can analyse the face, or understand the meaning of that cliff-like forehead. As we are not believers in the minute mappings of the cranium by phrenologists, we are not about to run our fingers lightly over the different bumps, and then with the

A PEN AND INK PORTRAIT.

boldness of an empiric sum up in figures all the faculties and capabilities of the man. But we have some faith in physiognomy and the general form of the head, and do most firmly hold that where the eye brings the power of seeing, the Universe of God, with its beauty and sublimity, does not more truly in its just proportion, proclaim the spirit of which it is the vestment, than the features and expression declare the soul which informs them all. Turn we then to our hero. Note first the regal setting of the head; graceful as the lily on its stalk is the union of head and neck; and when thrown back, while launching his words of scorn against some sham or lie, you will see the man storm-defiant as an English oak. We mean he could hold himself with grace at a Queen's levee, or stand all undaunted with proud defiance in his attitude, amid the hisses and clamour of an ignorant mob. This very thing proclaims him one of God's royal race. We do not imply that no one without this noble air can rule their fellow-men by pen or speech, for we have a vivid recollection of the dumpy necks of John Bright and W. J. Fox; but we say, in every case where the Supreme has so clothed the man with grace and dignity, there is the stamp of power, the possessor is an accredited hero, and though our knees were as brass, we must bend to him. Look at the portraits of Burns, Christopher North, or Daniel Webster, and tell us if you need to read their written lives to know that these men were rulers. Let us now look a little more attentively at the face and forehead. To commence with the latter—what does it say of the powers enfolded within? We believe Mr. Binney is chiefly famous for his power of abstract thought, and for the logical method and clearness with which he can put an argument. Yet the more we consider the lines and form of the brow and temples, the stronger grows our belief that the imaginative is his ruling faculty. Undoubtedly that brain is capable of severe and continuous thinking, the mental philosopher and the logician are *in posse*, but the poet, the creator o'erushadows all: and so instead of ice we have fire; instead of the mere logical deductions and admitted postulates of the pedant, we have the golden tide of wisdom and eloquence; and instead of the dumb and bloodless beauty of the statue, cold and stiff as the sleep of death, we have the warm and animated beauty and power of a living man. Speaking phrenologically, the hump of reverence rising so high that it gives to the forehead proper an appearance of loftiness which a nearer view considerably reduces, affords in some measure an explanation why this man, with head too massive to be bound within the limits of nicely constructed formulas and petty common-places; and with a frame which would have gained him the 'belt' among the 'fancy,' has found his life work in the pulpit of a religious denomination. The eye is hazel, and in his prime must have been keen and piercing as the eagle eyeing the thunder cloud. Now, however, though it still possesses somewhat of its mysterious fascination which ever radiates from the eye of genius, there are the marks which tell of many summers come and gone, and winters which brought sadder storms than ever swept o'er city or strewed a coast with wreck. Perhaps, even before contracted with age, it was not large enough to indicate the very highest class of mind, but certainly now it is not full enough to relieve what we may call the hardness of the glance, which though necessary on the battle field, scarcely harmonises with

* The light that never was on sea or shore.*

Allen Ramsey sings—

'Heed not the pretty lying o' their lips,
But tent the language o' their e'en.'

This may be truthful counsel to lovers of the female sex, but critics of character cannot afford to let the mouth go unnoticed. In this case we sincerely wish we could, for to us it is the only part of the face that is not thoroughly good. Again and again we looked at it, determined to chase away our first impression. Yes, we said the size is good, the lips are well cut, there is strength there. Back, however, it would come. What can it be? UN-

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feigned respect answered, you can see nothing there but a combination of strength and humour. It would not do, for clear as an inscription it was written on the corners of the mouth that in that nature was extreme sensitiveness, and coupling mouth and eye there seemed to us a tendency to irritability. As those who know Mr. Binney entirely deny the latter; we either greatly err, or that Christianity he so nobly expounds has put forth her healing influence and wrought in him her benign and holy work. A story we have heard told, and which is not one of the numerous fabrications in circulation respecting this gentleman, comes to memory partly confirming our theory. Some time ago Mr. B. was addressing a meeting of the Congregational Union, in London, when he said something which produced among his brethren sounds of dissent. On the instant Mr. B. forgot himself, and tartly asked, 'Can't you hold your peace!' which brought about his ears such a storm of hisses, that even he quailed, though as soon as the calm came, having felt himself in the wrong, he made an apology, such as only a great man could or would have made. Enough upon the features separately. Let us take the face as a whole. Lines are there telling as plainly of the general course of the soul life as if the several experiences had been written out for us in a five act drama. There ought, however, to be bounds to a critic's impertinence, and the inner life is too sacred to be babbled of, so, we must hint our meaning, not run into coarse analysis.

An Eastern legend runs thus, 'When the lofty and barren mountain was first upheaved into the sky, and from its elevation looked down on the plains below, and saw the valley and the less elevated hills covered with verdant and fruitful trees, it sent up to Brahma a murmur of complaint. "Why thus barren! Why these scarred and naked sides exposed to the eye of man?" And Brahma answered, "The very light shall clothe thee, and the shadow of the passing cloud shall be as a royal mantle. More verdure would be less light. Thou shalt share in the azure of heaven, and the youngest and whitest cloud of a summer's sky shall nestle in thy bosom. Thou belongest half to us." So was the mountain dowered.' 'And so, too,' adds the legend, 'have the loftiest minds of men been in all ages dowered. To lower elevations have been given the pleasant verdure, the vine, and the olive. Light, light alone—and the deep shadow of the passing cloud—these are the gifts of the prophets of the race.'

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"The preacher slowly, but emphatically, reads his text, 'Are ye not carnal and walk as men?' And during the pause, ere he commences his discourse, calmly scans the congregation as if he could read in that sea of up-turned faces the wants of those whom he is now as a minister of Christ to address. From beginning to end of that wondrous discourse Mr. Binney makes good his claim not merely to the title of a powerful thinker, but to what his friends may scarcely deem a compliment, to that of the artistic speaker. His manner (or as some love to call it—action) though at times far from graceful, was ever emphatic, and revealed the self-reliance of the preacher. We were rather surprised at the abundance of Mr. Binney's action in the pulpit, as we had always fancied his sin lay in the opposite extreme, a kind of Emersonian delivery, trusting entirely to the weightiness of the thought for its effect upon the audience. In avoiding this folly, however, in our opinion, Mr. B., despite his tall and well-formed frame, his long and beautifully shaped hand, errs in excess; certainly no *practised* English speaker we have ever listened to uses his body and arms so much. It might do with the third and fourth raters on a platform, but a double first (as thinker and speaker) like Mr. Binney, should leave it to that genus entirely. While fault-finding, we may notice that the arms thrown into fighting position, which was literally the case once during the sermon, is more than an inelegancy, it is an offence against good taste. But these remarks even to ourselves seem carping and querulous, when simply with regard to manner we call to mind the exquisite artistic power displayed in the delivery as a whole. The easy mastery of the voice, the striking naturalness of most of the action, the distinct utterance,

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the avoidance of painful slowness on the one hand, and too great rapidity on the other; and lastly, the giving what few preachers ever allow us, proper time for breath and reflection between the distinct parts of the discourse. People can in these days so seldom carry home in their minds a recollection of the discourse just listened to most attentively (mem.—the preachers say the fault lies in us), vivid enough to permit a criticism of its composition, i.e. in our use of the word, the arrangement and harmony of its parts. Not so with the sermon we now refer to. We venture to say that nearly every one of that vast auditory took away as complete an abstract of it as did the rather ugly and apparently unwashed individual who stood up so prominently in front of one of the side galleries, pretending to take a *verbatim* report. And to the educated mind what a treat! Sufficiently varied in topics to keep the subject from monotony, and the hearer enchained for one hour and thirty-eight minutes; each again of these divisions of subject rising above the other in popular interest and helping on the great argument running through all, and, further, the perfect harmony of the whole—no lengthened exordium, forcing the orator to cut short his peroration, but each in his own appointed sphere both as to time and prominence—thus making the sermon complete as a composition—a *sine qua non* to all oratorical success. The Parthenon, at Athens, bore away the palm, even in that city, of splendid architecture, but the incomplete Edinburgh copy of it, on the Calton Hill, stands the laughingstock of every man of sense and taste that looks upon it."

PECULIARITIES AND STYLE OF THE PREACHER.

"Were we attempting a complete criticism of Mr. Binney, instead of a brief and sketchy portrait, this would be the place to notice at length one of the great secrets of his fame, his vigorous but beautiful style; as it is we can only venture a reference to it. He for one has fully realized the truth that the speaker or writer in this age who would occupy a niche in the Temple of Fame, must give his most careful study, and bend his full powers to the acquisition of grace and power of style. And in this most difficult matter, our preacher has succeeded well. He is too much *the man* to affect the profound by the use of the barbaric jargon of German-English so dear to the hearts of under-graduates aspiring to the dignity of great thinkers; and his taste is too good to permit him for a moment to indulge in the tawdry finery of a Robert Montgomery. Even in his spoken sermons, you recognise a clearness of style equal to the clearness of his thinking; when he soars to the mountain tops of thought, his language also leaves the common place, and his finely chosen words are perfectly in keeping with the grandeur of the theme; so when he wishes to call forth the emotional within us, or to picture the beautiful, the words and rhythm of his sentences are like 'linked sweetness long drawn out.' Let any one of our readers who think we are over-colouring turn to two of Mr. Binney's works, 'The Service of Song,' and 'Is it Possible to Make the Best of Both Worlds,' and they will find in abundance, illustrations of our remarks. There are few living writers who could equal in word painting the description of the Psalms, or the character of David to be found in 'The Service of Song.' Here is a sentence from the former, 'They (the Psalms) are penitential, jubilant, adorative, deprecatory; they are tender, mournful, joyous, majestic; soft as the descent of dew; low as the whisper of love; loud as the voice of thunder; terrible as the Almightiness of God!' Whatever importance, however, we may attach to a speaker's manner and style, we readily admit that *what* he says is more important than *how* he says it. And this consideration introduces us to the matter of the sermon in question. Nearly all Mr. Binney's exordiums consist of exposition, and in this fact we fancy we discover his theory of the preacher's work. By his practice he seems to say, 'to man has been sent a book of infinite worth, in its pages the Holy Spirit has declared what it is absolutely necessary every man should know, and the chief duty of the spiritual teacher is just to discover by diligent study, and then expound as clearly as possible, what God says, instead of using any particular part of the book simply as a peg on

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which to hang his own thoughts.' Might we intrude our humble opinion within this 'charmed circle,' with bated breath, besiting the profane, we should whisper our agreement with those who employ the textual method. 'Is the Divine right of mediocrity in the pulpit to be for ever proclaimed then?' asks an excited reader; 'Is there to be no room for genius, or for poetic power and feeling, or for the strong massive thought of the powerful thinker?' Yes, verily, and with a full recollection of the most masterly scriptural exposition we ever listened to, as was unfolded to us, the ideas in the Apostolic mind, of which the generic word 'carnal' was the articulate expression, we assert that not more varied in glory are the lights which shine so purely in the midnight heavens than the degrees of ability which may find full exercise in this method of preaching. One train of reflection was started in our mind by the sermon. We had often before felt that if anything could shake our faith in the inspiration of the Bible it would be the utter want of truthfulness, common sense, and manliness displayed in many of our commentaries on its books. Of all insipidity and *jeuneur* commend us to a popular commentary. Alas! we fear many a young earnest spirit has found his way into the realm of the 'everlasting No!' through this tortuous *via dolorosa*. Now, here we thought, is a large brained educated, spiritual Englishman evidently possessing a deep acquaintance with the spirit of his age, and who speaks as if he too once had lifted his eyes unto the heavens and for a time beheld no Father's face looking down upon him, who is not a stranger to the anxieties either of shop or counting-house, and whose strong terse Saxon words the people could understand. Why should not he, as the great work of his life, give to his countrymen an exposition in his own style of part of the volume he so loves and understands! We wish that on our voice hung the practical answer to our query.

After Mr. Binney has set before his hearers what he believes to be the mind of the Spirit, in the words of the text, he commences an application of the principles evolved, or the doctrines stated, to what he considers the requirements of the men and women who sit before him. Here, without the slightest straining after the melodramatic, and carefully eschewing all clap-trap, he powerfully rivets and moves his audience. Young men and maidens, the artisan and clerk, the half-sceptic and the simple-minded hearer, are each after their kind mysteriously impressed. How is it? asked a friend while still under the fascination of the sermon we speak of. We replied thus: The Yankees have a saying which on the first blush sounds like an absurdity, but which every speaker and writer should be compelled to ponder for one month, to the exclusion of all other sublimary subjects. It is that 'there's a good deal of human nature in man.' And so, if you inquire, you will find there's a good deal of human nature in Mr. Binney."

CAUSES OF MR. BINNEY'S POPULARITY.

"We have heard that one gentleman, who wrote a paper on Mr. Binney, assigned as a principal cause of his popularity the possession, in a large degree of humour, as distinguished from wit, which in him most frequently flowed forth in delicate irony or trenchant satire. With this acute remark, to a great extent, we agree. His, however, is not the grim, inferno-like humour of Swift or Carlyle, so merciless and savage, but genial and loving like that which throws its sweet witchery over the fascinating page of Scott; though a tendency to controversy and a delight in hitting an adversary with 'the gloves off' often imparts to Mr. Binney's humour the pungency and sarcastic power of that of old Puritan-hating South. We have already given it as our opinion that the creative, or, limiting it to its philosophic signification, the imaginative, is the predominant faculty in Mr. Binney's nature. That belief, however, we cannot now further argue, and therefore can only ask our readers who may dissent from us, once more to weigh our previous statements. Next in prominence, undoubtedly stands in Mr. Binney the reasoning faculty; that glorious gift which, when love of truth overshadows its exercise, and the pure syllogism becomes its guide, leads its possessor from the city of ignorance, rescues him from the sloughs of despair, and, though the

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path it chooses may pass very close to Doubting Castle and the Temple of Indifference, though it may even necessitate a contest with Apollyon, eventually lands him safely in the 'land of Beulah where the flowers, the grapes, and the songs of birds never cease, where the sun shines night and day, and where are plainly seen the golden pavements and the streets of pearl.' From the first faculty comes Mr. Binney's synthetic power, and his breadth of thought, a manifestation of which we have in his 'Is it possible,' and in his well-known sermon, 'Salvation by fire, and Salvation in fulness;' and from the second, his great subtlety of analysis, that penetrative power he displayed so strikingly in his lecture on St. Paul, delivered in the church in Pitt Street, when with exquisite delight we listened to him dissecting ideas into their component parts with a touch as delicate and firm as ever Liston showed when engaged in any of his complex surgical operations. So also we account for his logical exactness. You may refuse to admit his premises, and so escape from his conclusion, but grant his major and minor, and you will find the deduction too clear and exact to be overthrown. A result of this logical acumen is his clearness of conception, from which again directly springs his luminous style, and these are the things which have made the pulpit of Weigh-House Chapel a centre of power, and installed our preacher as Golden Lecturer to Young England. These are his glory as a preacher—these the fountains of his eloquence. As Sir James Stephen somewhere finely says, 'The cloud-compelling Jupiter shrouded himself in darkness, because he dwelt in an abstracted and silent solitude; but the God of day rejoiced in the light, because he was also the God of eloquence.'

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"Poet and logician, using his fine powers in the noblest of all services, is it wonderful crowds have gathered around him wherever he has preached in our colony! And if of these some have come to listen merely from curiosity, certain are we that short as has been his sojourn among us, around his name hallowed associations have already twined themselves, which will cause hundreds to mourn his departure as that of a friend or personal benefactor. Happy would many be to hear that our beautiful land was henceforth to be the home of the father as well as of his sons. But should that joy not be ours, when he utters his *vale, vale*, thousands will approach the throne of Him 'who holds the winds and the waves in his fist' to implore that 'the everlasting arms' may be round about him while on the great deep, and that having been brought in safety to his 'desired haven,' the health he came so far to seek may be granted in such full measure, that the flock now mourning his absence may have cause with us to bless the Lord his steps were ever guided to the sunny shores of Australasia."

It will be a cause of much sorrow to the homeward bound travellers to learn, that in their absence from England, the father of Mrs. Binney, and the Senior Deacon of the Weigh-House Church, the venerable Thomas Piper, departed this life in the seventy-ninth year of his age.

In the letters lately received from Mr. Binney, he speaks of his health and spirits as greatly improved, and he has applied to his people at the Weigh-House for a further six months extension of his leave of absence. It will be the universal hope, that at the end of that period he may return and be welcomed back thoroughly re-invigorated by his foreign travel.

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No. XLVIII.

REST AND WAIT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON TUESDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 5, 1858,

BY THE REV. DANIEL MOORE, M.A.

AT ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH, LOTHBURY.

“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.”—Psalm xxxvii. 7.

SOLOMON, advanced to the highest point of worldly prosperity, and Job, reduced to the lowest extreme of outward reverse and sorrow, were both agreed upon one thing—namely, the proper estimate of life, considered as the end of man's happiness. And regarded in this view, their united judgment is that life is a very disappointing thing; a very unsatisfying thing—in its best estate and with its largest appliances always leaving a man with something else to wish for; with a conviction that beyond it, and apart from it, and independently of it, there must be a nobler field for his aspirations, and for his disquietudes a more abiding rest. The language is as much Job's as Solomon's—“the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing, for the thing that hath been is that which shall be.” And the conclusion is as much Solomon's as Job's—“I would not live always; I would not, if I might, be for ever and for ever rolling life's stone up the hill, just that on reaching the top, it might roll down again.” What can one year be but the repetition of another year which has gone before—full of mistakes as that, full of disquietudes as that, full of false dependences as that? The true rest not found, all other reliances for happiness are treacherous, shifting, mocking torments. It is as a thirsty man dreaming of water, and awakening to find it is a desert. Solomon, more than any other man, put life's material capabilities to the test. He multiplied springs of worldly happiness without number, but one after another he saw them all run dry; he found himself as empty and ill-furnished as Job was when the day of trial came. Thus there is but one relief for all men, whether for the full or for the hungry, for them that abound or them that suffer need—“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.”

There is nothing of marked purpose or connection in this passage requiring explanation. The circumstances were of frequent occurrence in David's life

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when he might have penned such a Psalm. He had leaned on human succour often enough, and fled to second hand reliefs often enough, but never with other than one result, namely, to make him "cease from man," to cease from himself, to convince him that if there were relief anywhere, it must be found by looking out and looking up. He must rest and wait; rest in what God is, wait for what God will do. There is a time for working, and a time for looking on while God works. When the extremity is come and we can do nothing, we are the better able to admire and wonder at what God does. It is when we are hemmed in between Pharaoh's chariots and the sea that the command comes—"Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." "Rest in the Lord, and wait."

Let us proceed to consider the state of mind here supposed, the persons subject to it, and the reliefs recommended.

And first, with regard to the state of mind assumed to need such an exhortation as this. This is sufficiently indicated by the relief prescribed. It is a state of unrest, of a mind ill at ease; a distracted heart going first to this source for relief and then to that, but never satisfied. The condition is well described by the prophet Haggai; and the man eats, but he has not enough; he drinks, but he is not filled with drink; he clothes himself, but he is not warmed; and though he earneth wages, he earneth them but to put them into a bag with holes. The idea suggested by all this is that of a man in difficulties, or need, trusting to inadequate consolations, building his house on ground too loose to bear it, leaning on a reed that gives way and runs up into his hand; and then disappointed of his hope, not knowing which way to turn or look. And the text is to remind him, that under such circumstances there is but one way and one strength; that other ways besides that one are but a going about, and other strengths beside that one but a comparison of weaknesses. The fabled receding of the stream from the parched lips that would stake at it, flowing to excite hope one moment, and ebbing to mock with despair the next, is only scripture truth in the guise of Pagan myth; it is only another way of describing that ever mocking and disappointing toil which spends money for that which is not bread and labour for that which satisfieth not, and the more spending the less bread, the more toil the less profit. "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?"

But let us pass on to consider some classes of persons who are thus laboriously miserable—doing and undoing; like children building up paper houses which are to fall down under their hands; or like something worse than children, ever "walking about in dry places, seeking rest and finding none."

And first, there are the men that have their portion in this present world, not knowing, and, perhaps, not very much caring to know, whether they

have a portion in any other. We need not take any extreme case, such as the covetous man, eaten up with his greed of gold, as with a canker, wasting health for it, injuring the poor for it, robbing God for it; nor the ambitious man whose idol is ever before him, the enshrined divinity of his heart, worshipped night and day in the church, in the closet, in the family, everywhere; nor the man of pleasure, whether the low sensualist revelling in his coarse tastes and unchastened appetites, or the empty-hearted followers of this vain-glorious world—we take only a common simple worldly man, whose aim is simply to have a tolerably well-to-do position in society, to see his children comfortably established, in short, to get out of the world as much as to zealous industry and prudent thrift the world may be reasonably expected to yield. Still the man's hope is here; whatever touches that touches the apple of his eye; and something does touch it or may touch it every day. He is never free from the fear of disappointment, or the fear of losses, or the fear of miscarriage and failure from some source. He cannot make a league with providential ill—with the recklessness of this man that it shall not hurt him, or with the unprincipled conduct of that man that it shall not ruin or destroy; and, then, on the first misadventure, the first heavy and discouraging blow, there will arise all the fretfulness, and discontent, and allowed thought of some wrong God is permitting; and envious soreness that some are getting on so much better will generally accompany a man with one hope only, and that hope not in God. Thus, the whole life of such people is a life of unrest, uncertainty, anxiety, lest some hurt should come to their chief good, yet never finding any solid satisfaction in the good they have chosen, even if they are able to keep it as it is. Well, who can doubt that all this feeling of self-dissatisfaction, this doing well to be angry because the gourd which came up in a night withered in a night, comes of a misplaced trust, of a seeking after happiness where God never intended we should find it; of a holding on by the loose and shifting stays of things seen and temporal, instead of making for ourselves a sure anchorage within the vail of the unseen and the eternal! Brethren, we are apt to forget that the sadness and sickness of heart which worldly men feel proceeds from their doing violence to a law of their being. They have taken up with something below the level of their nature, below their capacities of moral enjoyment, below what their souls were made and fitted for; and, therefore, that they should droop and sicken, and be of a sad countenance, and carry within them a wearied and withered heart, is no more to be wondered at than that a tropical plant should languish under the chilling influences of a northern sky. We have elements in our moral constitution which expressly link us with God, and Christ, and with the unseen world; elements whose life must be fed and nourished from these higher sources, just as much as the plant demands to have nourishment supplied to it from a congenial soil. Hence, though there may be life in a worldly-minded man, there will be no health,

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no vigour, no happiness; he has been crossing the Divine purpose in his creation, he has transplanted himself to an ungenial soil, he has suffered a torpor and paralysis to come over those powers of the soul which connect him with higher natures, and the spiritual world—and the consequence is he is not at ease, not at rest. The wonder would be if he were. God had so made man's heart that it should find its rest in him; and if it will not seek its rest in him, it shall find it in nothing else. Our heavenly Father knew that he had placed us in the midst of a conflicting, shifting, unstable world, where there was nothing for the heart to hold on by, nothing that continued in one state, and so as an anchor of the soul he gave us himself, and this hope stands when nothing else will. The fig-tree, vine, olive yards, fields, fold and store—"they may fail every one," says the prophet; "yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation." Rejoice in the Lord, observe, not in his gifts, but in himself, in the persuasion of his all-sufficient grace, in the sense of his near presence, in the felt waving of his banner over us, fanning us in the noontide heat with the breath of a Saviour's love. This is what the worldly man has to learn, and ignorance of it makes him restless, unsettled, drifting hither and thither, in his pursuit of false reliefs, not knowing that the only relief, and the best, is at hand always—"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him."

But let us consider the words of the text next, as addressed to a weary, burdened, conscience-convicted sinner. Here is a man who must have a rest of some sort. There is no such thing as getting accustomed to a troubled conscience, to a feeling that sin lies at its door, and that there it must remain. The question is no longer one of fortitude, or patience, or time; conscience will insist on having the alternative decided—a sufficient remedy or absolute despair. It cannot go on day after day vibrating in uncertainty between the two. It may be settled on a false foundation or on a true, but it must come to a state of rest. Like the Jews of old—every man goes about, as the apostle describes it, till he has established a righteousness, got a footing upon something which keeps conscience quiet for the time. It may be his moralities, his duties, his blameless life, and all these eked out and supplemented by the work of Christ upon the cross; still no matter how unscriptural the foundation, it is a halting place, and there he settles down and rests. But the thoroughly convinced sinner can find no comfort in such rest; he cannot set foot upon them without feeling the ground give way; his eyes are opened to see what the whole law of God is, how far it reaches, how deep it penetrates, how it pierces to the dividing asunder of the soul and Spirit, how it gathers into its mighty issues all the doings of an unremembered past, how it lays bare before the eye of God intents, plans, purposes which had never been allowed to proceed beyond the secret thought; and he sees what the infinite demands of the Divine government are, how impossible it is for a man to be just with God, or for a clean thing to come out of an unclean, and yet on the

other hand how impossible it would be for an unjust man to stand in the judgment, or for a soul with a taint of evil yet upon it to concert with the pure societies of heaven. And there is no going about after this; he must have a rest, something that will bear his soul, and all its burden of guilt and curse, and that will enable him to withstand the dread of death, and fear of meeting with God, and thoughts of the eternal world, what it is to be, and where it is to be; and but one such rest is there for any man, "one name given under heaven whereby we may be saved," one wisdom for his light, one righteousness for his plea, one sanctification to cleanse him from all spot of sin, one redemption to deliver him from its penalty, and curse, and power. He must hold himself on by Christ. Here is a ransom, full, perfect, available; every sin is covered by it, every law is satisfied by it, every perfection of the Divine nature is vindicated by it, every sinner is welcome to it; ay, the more welcome the more sinful, at least, if he only feel his sin. To bring us within reach of Christ's mercy, nothing is wanting but an affecting sense of our need of mercy. If we can get no rest in our sins, and no rest from them, from their assaults, from their oppressions, from their bitternesses, from their hateful enslaving power, we are exactly those for whom the proffered relief is prepared, exactly those whom Christ invites to partake of it—"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

To all, then, who are oppressed, fearful, casting about for some settled and fixed relief, wandering from hope to hope, but never finding one to satisfy, we say, rest and wait. Rest in what Christ is, and wait patiently for what Christ will do; rest in the perfection of his righteousness, in the richness of his sacrifice, in the might of his intercession, in the boundlessness of his power, in the sufficiency of his grace, in the tenderness of his sympathy, in the perpetuity of his covenant engagements remaining in all their force unto all and upon all them that believe. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth." And why does he justify? Because it is Christ that died, Christ the infinite, Christ the righteous, Christ the divine, Christ who is able to save all them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. And then "wait patiently for him;" that is, wait for the comfort, and peace, and joy of his salvation. God may have his reasons for not taking away all our spiritual disquietudes at once. "It is good," says the prophet, "that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." An awakened conscience must lay its account with a season of distress; it is an interval of discipline—the soul's exodus from its estate of bondage and condemnation to one of liberty and sonship. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord," says Micah, "because I have sinned against him"—against the light of his promise, against the persuasion of his love, the motions of his spirit, the drawings and restraints both of his assisting and preventing grace. Yes, 'I will bear, but I will wait.' It is promised that

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our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord ; and least of all shall our waiting labour be in vain—the hard work of keeping silent watch while the reliefs of God are on their way, the patient toil of looking out for deliverance, when there is no visible door, expecting comfort to be brought to us, when there seems to be neither voice nor hand, the clouds of eventide getting thicker and thicker, and yet neither opening nor streak of light. This is waiting patiently, hoping on in the darkness and through the darkness, letting conscience speak, and the holy law of God speak, and a thousand sad and sorrowful memories speak, and listening to all they have to say against us, admitting that it is all true and far more, yet the foot never moved from its rest, nor the hand from its fast holding. Why should they? If either were to let go its trust, could they find any other? The waves of Divine wrath may dash me off the rock I am clinging to, but better that, than that with the wild leap of despair, I should plunge into the deep of myself. Though he slay me, he shall slay me trusting, slay me resting on his word; slay me waiting patiently for a faithful Christ to prove himself faithful, or to reproach the bold conscience that had dared to seek shelter in his cross ; at all events my mind is made up to one thing, he shall save me or none else shall. I will go no further ; my soul shall not waste her powers in going to this refuge or that ; but I will say unto her, be what thou mayest, or be where thou mayest, accepted or a castaway, in life or in death, in the land of peace, or in the swellings of Jordan, hold thee on; be still, “rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.”

One other aspect of our text remains to be taken, namely, considering the words as addressed to the more established believer, under all the disquietudes and trials which he must expect to meet with in his Christian course, whether from the sorrows of life or the temptations of Satan, or the dark and difficult things in his own providential lot; or those harassing fluctuations in the feelings of his inner life, which, at times, almost move him from his hope. He has his share in outward afflictions ; sorrow is a universal baptism ; the measure to all men may not be the same, nor the reason always plain why one man should have so much more than another, but still the cup is always going round, and to the child of God it is commonly a full cup. Well, what enables him to drink it? Why, the persuasion that mixed, as full as it may be, and steeped as much with bitter herbs as it may be, it comes from a Father's hand. “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” Thus, he rests and waits; he does not distress and torment himself with speculations about how the evil came, what caused the sickness, whose was the blame of the misfortune, who was the author of the injury, who took the peace of his heart away ; be they who they may, they were God's servants, their power was from him, their weapons were from him, the limit of their mischief was from him, and in this he rests. He knows that God has kind thoughts towards him, can have no other ; and if, in addition to this, he whom he trusts is too wise to err, too faithful to forget, too omnipotent to be thwarted, what has he to do but to “wait patiently” for the expected end? and what that end is he knows, at least, so far as he knows that it is for his profit. This is the law of all chastening, that the effect of it may be to discover to us that which is weak, or correct in us that which is hurtful, or to make us take out of the way that which hinders our advance in godliness. Any how, the design is one to make us better. Chastening, to

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the believer, never ends in chastening; it bears fruit, teaches the man to rest and wait, to hold himself still upon God while the affliction lasts, and to wait for those peaceable fruits of righteousness promised to them that are exercised thereby. And so with regard to other perplexities often permitted to the believer. See him in a time of great fear, when he sees some great calamity on the way; the cloud is so thick, dark, and close over his head that he feels it must burst, and yet he cannot, and will not, part with his hope. What is to sustain him in this oscillating condition of mental feeling? Human succours? They are of no avail. Human counsels? They are utterly at a stand. He no sooner rests upon a finite dependence than he is driven from it; he has no sooner pleased himself with the thought that he saw a bright opening than it closes in again, and things are darker than before: but he has his own relief, he rests in God. If the cloud is to break, break it will in the best time, and in the kindest way. Speculations, conjectures, restless thoughts, reading of signs, and interpreting of signs, all these take the mind off from its tranquillity, from its repose on that deep and unshaken centre, the covenant faithfulness and love of God. God is waiting to be gracious: we must wait to see him gracious. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him."

Nor is the lesson any other when a good man's trials take a more mysterious form; when he is thwarted in his desires to do good: when the greatest helps to his spiritual advancement are removed; when new temptations are thrown in his way, when the messenger of Satan is sent to buffet him again and again; when no answer comes to the most lawful and permitted prayer; when the obstacle continues untaken away which hinders his enjoyment of a present God. In all such cases there is nothing for him to do but to "rest and wait." He must rest in the wise orderings of him whose way is in the sea, and whose path is in the great waters, and whose footsteps are not known. We are no better judges of what is good for us in relation to our spiritual than in relation to our temporal lot. We wish to have our rest in spiritual comforts, spiritual peace, spiritual aspirations after the joys of the eternal state; but God would have us rest in himself. "My flesh longeth after thee," says the Psalmist—"All my springs are in thee." "Lord, whom have I in heaven but thee?" Brethren, God will not have his best gifts prized more than himself; not peace in prayer, not joy in ordinances, not near communion and fellowship with the spiritual and the eternal and unseen. And well for us is it that he will not; for who knows not how fluctuating these experiences are, how at the bidding of disease, of sorrow, of disappointment, or even a little vexation of spirit, they suffer interruption or decay? What is to save a good man from the tyranny of desponding thoughts, from old sins rising up before the mind afresh, and telling him that all his fancied interest in the promises is a delusion and a cheat, but the lifting himself up above the region of his personal experience altogether, and holding himself on by the saint's rest? "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Yes, rest and wait, wait trusting, waiting, expecting, like the impotent man at the gate of the temple, looking to receive something. He that believeth must not make haste; though the vision tarry he must wait for it. The help will come, but it will be in God's time and in God's way. In no way can you hasten it so well as by sitting still, by resting in the Lord, and waiting patiently for him.

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The general lesson of our subject, brethren, is that we be without carefulness, that we carry our burdens to God, and leave them with him; our fears to him to be quieted, our sorrows to him to be lightened, our corruptions to him to be overcome, our sins to him to be forgiven. God in Christ is the soul's refuge and the soul's rest. Safe in that unapproached enclosure shall the troubled conscience hide; emboldened by that strong plea, the very guiltiest of our race may exclaim, "I know in whom I have believed." Wherefore, whatever your load of sorrow may be, rest and wait. Are you liable to be "careful and cumbered about many things?" Rest in the Lord. One thing is needful, and he is that one. Are you struggling with some besetting sin, a temper, a habit, a root of bitterness, that your soul hates, and yet something that is always crossing your path, and which you cannot get under? Rest in the Lord; his grace is sufficient for thee, and in him you shall be more than conqueror. Are you bowed down by a sense of past sins, as many as they are great, as excuseless as they are dark; some like David's, committed after he had come to the light; some like Peter's, while the sound of solemn warning was yet in his ears? Rest in the Lord; he is faithful, he cannot deny himself; heaven and earth shall pass away, but not that word—"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

And wait when you have fled to this rest. You have made your choice, you must abide by it; you have fled to the altar, you must cleave to it. A man who has got to the cross of Christ, can get no farther. It is God's own extremity; so that if by the power of a living faith the convinced sinner has reached it, there he must wait, there he must hold on; and if it be a sin to trust God too much, there he must perish too. But, tell us, O ye angels of light, tell us ye saints under the altar, tell us ye spirits of just men made perfect, saw ye ever such a sight as this—a soul trusting and yet sinking, cleaving to the rock and yet betrayed by the rock; throwing itself in bold venture into the hands of Christ, and yet allowed to drop through into the deep gulf of eternal death? Oh, no; the truth is proclaimed and attested everywhere, in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, in the world of despair and darkness, and by the praise of the glorified sons of light—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." He has but to rest and wait, to hold on and trust, to wait patiently to see God working for him behind the cloud. He has not to seek his warrant for this; God himself has given him one: "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

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SELF-EXAMINATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 10, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."—2 Corinthians xiii. 5.

I HAD intended to address you this morning from the third title given to our blessed Redeemer, in the verse we have considered twice before—"Wonderful, Counsellor, *the mighty God*;" but owing to excruciating pain and continual sickness, I have been unable to gather my thoughts together, and therefore I feel constrained to address you on a subject which has often been upon my heart and not unfrequently upon my lips, and concerning which, I dare say, I have admonished a very large proportion of this audience before. You will find the text in the thirteenth chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, at the fifth verse—"*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates*"—a solemn text, that we cannot preach too impressively, or too frequently meditate.

The Corinthians were the critics of the apostles' age. They took to themselves great credit for skill in learning and in language, and as most men do who are wise in their own esteem, they made a wrong use of their wisdom and learning—they began to criticise the apostle Paul. They criticised his style. "His letters," say they, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible." Nay, not content with that, they went so far as to deny his apostleship, and for once in his life, the apostle Paul found himself compelled to "become a fool in glorying; for," says he, "ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing." The apostle wrote two letters to them; in both he is compelled to upbraid them while he defends himself, and when he had fully disarmed his opponents, and wrested the sword of their criticism out of their hands, he pointed it at their own breasts, saying, "'Examine yourselves.' You have disputed my doctrine; examine whether ye be in the faith. You have made me prove my apostleship; 'prove your own selves.' Use the powers which you have been so wrongfully exercising upon me for a little season upon your own characters."

And now, my dear friends, the fault of the Corinthians is the fault of the present age. Let not any one of you, as he goeth out of the house of God, say unto his neighbour, "How did you like the preacher? What did you think of the sermon this morning?" Is that the question you should ask as you retire from God's house? Do you come here to judge God's servants? I know it is but a small thing unto us to be judged of man's judgment; for our judgment is of the Lord our God; to our own Master we shall stand or fall. But, O men! ye should ask a question more profitable unto yourselves than this. Ye should say, "Did not such-and-such a speech strike me? Did not that exactly consort with my condition? Was that not a rebuke that I deserve, a word of reproof or of exhortation? Let me take unto myself that which I have heard, and let me not judge the preacher, for he is God's messenger to my soul: I came up here to be judged of God's Word, and not to judge God's Word myself." But since there is in all our hearts a great backwardness to self-examination, I shall lay out myself for a few minutes this morning, earnestly to exhort myself, and all of you, to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith.

First, I shall *expound my text*; secondly, I shall *enforce it*; and thirdly, I shall try and help you to *carry it into practice* here and on the spot.

I. First, I shall **EXPOUND MY TEXT**; though in truth it needs no exposition, for it is very simple, yet by studying it, and pondering it, our hearts may become more deeply affected with its touching appeal. "*Examine yourselves.*" Who does not understand that word? And yet, by a few suggestions you may know its meaning more perfectly.

"Examine," that is a *scholastic idea*. A boy has been to school a certain time, and his master puts him through his paces—questions him, to see whether he has made any progress,—whether he knows anything. Christian, catechise your heart; question it, to see whether it has been growing in grace; question it, to see if it knows anything of vital godliness or not. Examine it: pass your heart through a stern examination as to what it does know and what it does not know, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Again: it is a *military idea*. "Examine yourselves," or renew yourselves. Go through the rank and file of your actions, and examine all your motives. Just as the captain on review-day is not content with merely surveying the men from a distance, but must look at all their accoutrements, so do you look well to yourselves; examine yourselves with the most scrupulous care.

And once again, this is a *legal idea*. "Examine yourselves." You have seen the witness in the box, when the lawyer has been examining him, or, as we have it, cross-examining him. Now, mark: never was there a rogue less trustworthy or more deceitful than your own heart, and as when you are cross-examining a dishonest person—one that hath bye-ends to serve, you set traps for him to try and find him out in a lie, so do with your own heart. Question it backward and forward, this way and that way; for if there be a loophole for escape, if there be any pretence for self-deception, rest assured your treacherous heart will be ready enough to avail itself of it.

And yet once more: this is a *traveller's idea*. I find in the original, it has this

meaning: "Go right through yourselves." As a traveller, if he has to write a book upon a country, is not content to go round its borders merely, but goes, as it were, from Dan to Beersheba, right through the country. He climbs the hill top, where he bathes his forehead in the sunshine: he goes down into the deep valleys, where he can only see the blue sky like a strip between the lofty summits of the mountains. He is not content to gaze upon the broad river unless he trace it to the spring whence it rises. He will not be satisfied with viewing the products of the surface of the earth, but he must discover the minerals that lie within its bowels. Now, do the same with your heart. "Examine yourselves." Go right through yourselves from the beginning to the end. Stand not only on the mountains of your public character, but go into the deep valleys of your private life. Be not content to sail on the broad river of your outward actions, but go follow back the narrow rill till you discover your secret motive. Look not only at your performance, which is but the product of the soil, but dig into your heart and examine the vital principle. "Examine yourselves." This is a very big word—a word that needs thinking over; and I am afraid there be very few, if any of us, who ever come up to the full weight of this solemn exhortation—"Examine yourselves."

There is another word you will see a little further on, if you will kindly look at the text. "*Prove your own selves.*" That means more than self-examination: let me try to show the difference between the two. A man is about to buy a horse; he examines it; he looks at it; he thinks that possibly he may find out some flaw, and therefore he carefully examines it; but after he has examined it, if he be a prudent man, he says to the person of whom he is about to buy—"I must prove this horse: will you let me have it for a week, for a month, or for some given time, that I may prove the animal before I actually invest in him? You see, there is more in proof than in examination; it is a deeper word, and goes to the very root and quick of the matter. I saw but yesterday an illustration of this. A ship, before she is launched, is examined; when launched she is carefully looked at; and yet before she is allowed to go far out to sea, she takes a trial trip; she is proved and tried, and when she has roughed it a little, and it has been discovered that she will obey the helm, that the engines will work correctly, and that all is in right order, she goes out on her long voyages. Now, "*prove yourselves.*" Do not merely sit in your closet and look at yourselves alone, but go out into this busy world and see what kind of piety you have. Remember, many a man's religion will stand examination that will not stand proof. We may sit at home and look at our religion, and say, "Well, I think this will do!" It is like cotton prints that you can buy in sundry shops; they are warranted fast colours, and so they seem when you look at them, but they are not washable when you get them home. There is many a man's religion like that. It is good enough to look at, and it has got the "warranted" stamped upon it; but when it comes out into actual daily life, the colours soon begin to run, and the man discovers that the thing was not what he took it to be. You know, in Scripture we have an account of certain very foolish men that would not go to a great supper; but, foolish as they were, there was one of them who said, "I have bought a yoke of

oxen, and I go to prove them." Thus he had at least worldly wisdom, enough to prove his oxen. So do you prove yourselves. Try to plough in the furrows of duty: see whether you can be accustomed to the yoke of gospel servitude; be not ashamed to put yourselves through your paces; try yourself in the furnace of daily life, lest haply the mere examination of the chamber should detect you to be a cheat, and you should after all prove to be a castaway. "Examine yourselves; prove your own selves."

There is a sentence which I omitted, namely, this one: "Examine yourselves, *whether ye be in the faith.*" Oh! says one, "You may examine me whether I am in the faith; I am an orthodox Christian, fully up to the standard, good genuine weight; there is no fear whatever of my coming up to the mark, and going a little beyond it too." Ah! but, my friend, that is not the question; I would have you orthodox, for a man who is heterodox in his opinions, will most likely be heterodox in his actions; but the question now is not whether you believe the truth—but whether you are in the truth? Just to give you an illustration of what I mean. There is the ark; and a number of men around it. "Ah!" says one, "I believe that ark will swim." "Oh!" says another, "I believe that ark is made of gopher-wood, and is strong from stem to stern; I am quite sure that ark will float, come what may; I am a firm believer in that ark." Ay, but when the rain descended, and the flood came, it was not believing the ark as a matter of fact—it was being in the ark that saved men, and only those that were in it escaped in that dread day of deluge. So there may be some of you that say of the gospel of Christ, "I believe it to be of a particular character," and you may be quite correct in your judgment; you may say, "I think it to be that which honours God, and casts down the pride of man;" herein too you may think quite right; but mark, it is not having an orthodox faith, but it is being in the faith, being in Christ, taking refuge in Him as in the ark; for he that only has the faith as a thing *ad extra*, and without being in the faith, shall perish in the day of God's anger; but he that lives by faith, he who feels that faith operates upon him, and is to him a living principle; he who realises that faith is his dwelling place, that there he can abide, that it is the very atmosphere he breathes and the very girdle of his loins to strengthen him,—such a man is in the faith. But, we repeat again, all the orthodoxy in the world, apart from its effect upon the heart as a vital principle, will not save a man. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."

"Know ye not your own selves?" If you do not, you have neglected your proper study. What avails all else that you do know, if you know not yourself? You have been roaming abroad, while the richest treasure was lying at home; you have been busying yourself with irrelevant affairs, while the main business has been neglected and ruined. "Know ye not your own selves?" And especially know ye not this fact, that Jesus Christ must be in your heart, formed and living there, or else ye are reprobates? That is, ye are worthless persons, vain pretenders, spurious professors; your religion is but a vanity and a show. "Reprobate silver shall men call you, because the Lord hath rejected you."

Now, what is it to have Jesus Christ in you? The Roman Catholic hangs the

cross on his bosom; the true Christian carries the cross in his heart; and a cross inside the heart, my friends, is one of the sweetest cures for a cross on the back. If you have a cross in your heart—Christ crucified in you, the hope of glory—all the cross of this world's troubles will seem to you light enough, and you will easily be able to sustain it. Christ in the heart means Christ believed in, Christ beloved, Christ trusted, Christ espoused, Christ communed with, Christ as our daily food, and ourselves as the temple and palace wherein Jesus Christ daily walks. Ah! there are many here that are total strangers to the meaning of this phrase. They do not know what it is to have Jesus Christ in them. Though ye know a little about Christ on Calvary, ye know nothing about Christ in the heart. Now, remember, that Christ on Calvary will save no man, unless Christ be in the heart. The Son of Mary, born in the manger, will not save a soul, unless he be also born in your hearts, and live there—your joy, your strength, and your consolation. "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

II. The second point was to ENFORCE THE TEXT. I have proved it; now I am to enforce it; and here is the tug of war. May the Spirit of the living God drive the sword in up to its very hilt this morning, that now the power of God may be felt in every heart, searching and trying the reins. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith."

"Examine yourselves," first, *because it is a matter of the very highest importance.* Small tradesmen may take coppers over the counter without much examination; but when it comes to gold, they will ring it well, for they could not afford to lose a sovereign out of their little gains; and if it comes to a five pound note, there is an anxious holding it up to the window to see if the water mark be there, and whether all be correct, for it might be ruin to the man if he lost a sum to him so large. Ah! but, merchants and tradesmen, if ye be deceived in the matter of your own souls, ye are deceived indeed. Look well to the title deeds of your estate; look well to your life policies, and to all the business that you do; but, remember, all the gold and silver you have, are but as the rack and scum of the furnace, compared with the matter now in hand. It is your soul, your own soul, your never dying soul! Will you risk that? In times of panic, men will scarcely trust their fellows; I would to God there was a panic this day, so that no man would trust himself. Ye may trust your fellows far more safely than ye may trust yourselves. Will ye think, men and brethren, what your soul is? "The life is more than meat, and the body than raiment;" but the soul is as much more to be accounted of than the body, as the body is more important than the raiment. Here are my clothes: let me be robbed of my garments; if my body be secure, what signifies it? And as for my body, what is it, after all, but the rag that enshrines and covers my soul? Let that be sick, let that become like a worn-out vesture, I can afford to lose my body; but, O God, I cannot afford to have my soul cast into hell. What a frightful hazard is that which you and I are running, if we do not examine ourselves! It is an everlasting hazard; it is a hazard of heaven or of hell, of God's eternal favour, or of his everlasting curse. Well might the apostle say, "Examine yourselves."

Again: "Examine yourselves," *because if ye make a mistake ye can never rectify it, except in this world.* A bankrupt may have lost a fortune once, and yet

may make another; but make bankruptcy—spiritual bankruptcy in this life, and you will never have an opportunity to trade again for heaven. A great general may lose one battle, but, with skill and courage he may retrieve his honour by winning another; but get defeated in the battle of this life, and you can no more gird on your armour; you are defeated for ever; the day is lost, and there is no hope of your being able to gain it again, or so much as to make the attempt. Now, or never, man! remember that. Thy soul's eternal state hangs on the turn of to-day. Loiter thy time away, waste thine abilities, take thy religion at second hand, of thy priest, of thy minister, or of thy friend, and in the next world thou shalt everlastingly rue the error, but thou shalt have no hope of amending it.

“Fix'd is their everlasting state,
 Could man repent, 'tis then too late.
 There are no acts of pardon pass'd
 In the cold grave, to which we haste;
 But darkness, death, and long despair,
 Reign in eternal silence there.”

“Examine yourselves,” again, *because many have been mistaken.* That is a matter which I will undertake to affirm upon my own authority, certain that each one of you can confirm it by your own observation. How many in this world think themselves to be godly when they are not? You have in the circle of your own friends, persons making a profession, of whom you often stand in astonishment, and wonder how they dare to do it. Friend, if others have been mistaken, may not you be? If some here and there fall into an error, may not you also do the same? Are you better than they? No, in nowise. You may be mistaken also. Methinks I see the rocks on which many souls have been lost—the rocks of presumption, and the syren song of self-confidence entices you on to those rocks this morning. Stay, mariner, stay, I beseech thee! Let you bleached bones keep thee back. Many have been lost, many are lost now, and are wailing at this present hour their everlasting ruin, and their loss is to be traced to nothing more than this, that they never examined themselves whether they were in the faith.

And here let me appeal to each person now present. Do not tell me that you are an old church member; I am glad to hear it; but still, I beseech you, examine yourself, for a man may be a professor of religion thirty or forty years, and yet there may come a trial-day, when his religion shall snap after all and prove to be a rotten bough of the forest. Tell me not you are a deacon: that you may be, and yet you may be damnably deceived. Ay, and whisper not to me that you are a minister. My brethren in the ministry,—we may lay aside our cassocks to wear belts of flame in hell; we may go from our pulpit, having preached to others what we never knew ourselves, and have to join the everlasting wailings of souls we have helped to delude. May God save us from such a doom as that! But let no man fold his arms, and say, “I need not examine myself;” for there is not a man here, or anywhere, who has not good cause to test and try himself to-day.

Furthermore: examine yourselves, because God will examine you. In the hand of God there is the scale and the balance; you shall not be taken into heaven for

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what you profess to be; but you shall be weighed—every one of you put into the scale. What a moment will that be with me and with you, when we are in God's great scale; surely where it not for faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and for a certainty that we shall be clothed in his righteousness at last, we might all tremble at the thought of ever being there, lest we should have to come out of the scale with this verdict, "*Tekel*,"—"Mene, mene, tekem, upharsin")—"thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting." God will not take his gold and silver by appearance, but every vessel must be purified in the fire. We must each one of us pass through a most searching test and scrutiny. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us, how much more shall God condemn us? If we are afraid to examine ourselves, what cause have we to tremble at the thought of the dread searching of God? Some of you feel that you are condemned this very day by a poor creature like myself: how much more, then, shall you be condemned when God, in thunder-robbed, shall summon you and all your fellows to the last infallible judgment. Oh! may God help us now to examine ourselves!

And I have yet one more reason to give. Examine yourselves, my dear friends, *because, if you are in doubt now, the speediest way to get rid of your doubts and fears is by self-examination*. I believe that many persons are always doubting their eternal condition, because they do not examine themselves. Self-examination is the safest cure for one half the doubts and fears that vex God's people. Look at the captain over yonder. He is in his ship, and he says to the sailors, "You must sail very warily and carefully, and be upon your watch, for to tell you the truth, I do not know where I am; I do not exactly know my latitude and longitude, and there may be rocks very close ahead, and we may soon have the ship broken up." He goes down into the cabin, he searches the chart, he takes an inspection of the heavens, he comes up again, and he says, "Hoist every sail, and go along as merrily as you please; I have discovered where we are; the water is deep, and there is a wide berth room; there is no need for you to be in any trouble; searching has satisfied me." And how happy will it be with you, if, after having searched yourself you can say, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." Why, then you will go along merrily and joyfully, because the search has had a good result. And what if it should have a bad result? Better that you should find it out now than find it out too late. One of the prayers I often pray, and desire to pray as long as I live, is this,—“Lord, let me know the worst of my case. If I have been living in a false comfort, Lord, rend it away; let me know just what I am and where I am, and rather let me think too harshly of my condition before thee than think too securely, and so be ruined by presumption.” May that be a prayer of each heart, and be heard in heaven!

III. And now how are you to search yourselves? I am to try and help you, though it must be very briefly.

First, if you would examine yourselves, *begin with your public life*. Are you dishonest? Can you thief? Can you swear? Are you given to drunkenness, uncleanness, blasphemy, taking God's name in vain, and violation of his holy day? Make short work with yourself; there will be no need to go into any further tests. "He that doeth these things, hath no inheritance in the kingdom of God." You

are reprobate; the wrath of God abideth on you. Your state is fearful; you are accursed now, and except you repent you must be accursed for ever.

And yet, Christian, despite thy many sins, canst thou say, "By the grace of God I am what I am; but I seek to live a righteous, godly, and sober life, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." Remember, professor, by thy works thou shalt be judged at last. Thy works cannot save thee, but they can prove that thou art saved; or if they be evil works, they can prove that thou art not saved at all. And here I must say, every one of us has good cause to tremble, for our outward acts are not what we would have them to be. Let us go to our houses, and fall upon our face, and cry again, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and let us seek for more grace, that henceforth our lives may be more consistent, and more in accordance with the spirit of Christ.

Again: another set of tests—*private tests*. *How about your private life?* Do you live without prayer, without searching the Scriptures? Do you live without thoughts of God? Can you live as an habitual stranger to the Most High, having no love to him, and no fear of him? If so, I make short work of the matter: you are "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity." But if thou art right at heart, thou wilt be able to say, "I could not live without prayer; I have to weep over my prayers, but still I should weep ten times more if I did not pray; I do love God's word, it is my meditation all the day; I love his people; I love his house; and I can say that my hands are often lifted upward towards him; and when my heart is busy with this world's affairs, it is often going up to his throne." A good sign, Christian, a good sign for thee; if thou canst go through this test, thou mayest hope that all is well.

But go a little deeper. Hast thou ever wept over thy lost condition? Hast thou ever bemoaned thy lost estate before God? Say, hast thou ever tried to save thyself, and found it a failure? and hast thou been driven to rely simply, wholly, and entirely on Christ? If so, then thou hast passed the test well enough. And hast thou now faith in Christ—a faith that makes thee love him; a faith that enables thee to trust him in the darkest hour? Canst thou say of a truth that thou hast a secret affection towards the Most High—that thou lovest his Son, that thy desire is after his ways, that thou feelest the influence of the Divine Spirit, and seekest every day to experience the fellowship of the Holy Spirit more and more?

And lastly, canst thou say that Jesus Christ is in thee? If not, thou art reprobate. Sharp though that word be, thou art a reprobate. But if Jesus Christ be in thy heart, though thy heart sometimes be so dark that thou canst scarcely tell he is there, yet thou art accepted in the beloved, and thou mayest "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

I intended to have enlarged; but it is impossible for me to go further; I must therefore dismiss you with a sacred blessing.

Just published, Vol. III. of the PULPIT LIBRARY; containing Twelve Sermons preached in the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens, by the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON; printed in Large Type, with Portrait. Cloth, price 2s. 6d.

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AS GOOD SOLDIERS OF JESUS CHRIST.

A SERMON

PREACHED

ON SUNDAY MORNING, the 3rd of OCTOBER, 1858,

BY

THE REV. JAMES LUPTON, A.M.

(Minor Canon of St. Paul's, and Westminster Abbey, and Rector of St. Michael, Queenhithe.)

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, LONDON.

BEFORE THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD MAYOR,

COLONEL WILSON,

AND THE OFFICERS AND PRIVATES OF

THE ROYAL LONDON MILITIA.

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."—
2 Timothy ii. 3.

LONDON:

JAMES PAUL, 1, CHAPTER HOUSE COURT,

NORTH SIDE ST. PAUL'S, AND PATERNOSTER ROW.

ROYAL LONDON MILITIA AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

On Sunday, October 3, 1858, by permission of Dean Milman, the regiment of the London Militia, now in training under the command of Colonel Wilson, attended Divine service at St. Paul's. The men assembled at half-past eight o'clock, and were marched in the following order:

Police to clear the way.

The fine Band of twenty musicians, in their new white clothing, headed by the Drum-Major, with his official baton.

Colonel Wilson (mounted).

Lieutenant-Colonel MacCall (mounted).

The Advanced Guard.

Major Harvey and Adjutant Hall (mounted).

The Privates (497 in number) four deep.

Staff Surgeon, G. B. Childs, (mounted).

Rear Guard.

Police four abreast.

The Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress were present at the Cathedral; and, after the service, attended in the Court-yard to see the procession pass. The Lord Mayor expressed his high approbation of the conduct and orderly behaviour of the men during the service, but very much regretted to see so few with Prayer Books.

Upon returning to head-quarters, Colonel Wilson addressed them upon their behaviour in Church, as well as their conduct during the whole time they had been under training; it gave him very great pleasure to be able to state that during the seven years he had been connected with the regiment, he had seen a visible yearly improvement in their behaviour. On this occasion the Guard reports were blank; he had not been called upon to punish a single man. The neighbours and the police had very generally expressed their approval of the conduct of the men, both by night as well as by day. It was exceedingly gratifying to their officers to hear such testimony from all quarters. They had been highly complimented by the General, while in camp, upon their good conduct; and he was glad to see that they maintained it to the present time, and appeared to know their position as soldiers. He had presented them each with a Prayer Book while in camp, and had written in their names. If there were any who still possessed them, and they were worn out, if they would bring them to him after the training, he should have pleasure in giving them new ones.

INSPECTION.—On Monday, Colonel Douglass arrived upon the ground at half-past two, and was received with the general salute, the band playing during the time, when Colonel Wilson was requested by the Inspecting Officer to march past in quick time, and at quarter distance, to form line, open ranks, and dismount. The Inspecting Officer then took one company at a time, and made a most minute inspection of the men and their dress. This over, the Major was called upon to put the regiment through the manual and platoon exercise—the Lieut.-Colonel, the battalion exercise—the Major, light infantry movements,—which very much pleased the ladies and children, and drew forth strong expressions of approbation from the Inspecting Officer. Colonel Wilson then formed the whole in line, opened ranks, gave the general salute, closed column on the leading division, and Colonel Douglass addressed the men, very highly complimenting them on their military appearance and achievements.

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, the men have been volunteering into the line. On Wednesday the officers subscribed a sum of money, and the men enjoyed themselves at foot-ball, racing, running in sacks, swarming up poles, wheeling in barrows, &c., &c. On Thursday they returned their acknowledgments into store, and returned to their different employments, much pleased and gratified at the high character they had maintained. The Commissioners of Lieutenancy (who were present in considerable numbers at the inspection on Monday) ordered a letter to be written officially, by their secretary, Mr. Henly Smith, addressed to the Colonel, which he read on the last day publicly in the field; upon which the men gave three hearty cheers. He stated he hoped to meet them again early in the spring, in the same good health and spirits that he now parted with them.

AS GOOD SOLDIERS OF JESUS CHRIST.

A Sermon

PREACHED

BY THE REV. JAMES LUPTON, A.M.

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."—2 Timothy ii. 3.

CHRISTIANS in this world are frequently described in Scripture as being in a state of warfare. And hence they are told to "fight the good fight of faith,"—to "lay hold on eternal life." The Apostle Paul compares his own condition to that of a warfare. "I have fought a good fight," says he, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." The contest going on between the good principle and the bad, in the Christian man, is also compared to a warfare. St. Paul, meaning in his own person to describe the condition of all who seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, through Jesus Christ, says, "I find that when I would do good evil is present with me, for I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." And in the text, St. Paul addresses Timothy as a soldier,—and to warn him of the difficulties which he would probably have to encounter, and in some measure to prepare him to meet and encourage him to overcome them, he says, "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

Being called upon this morning to direct my discourse to those in our City who have girded on their armour, and who have undertaken to defend the rights and liberties of this free nation, (should they ever, by foreign foe, be assailed,) I have chosen a text which I thought might be applicable to the occasion,—a text which will lead us to a knowledge of what are some of the main duties of a Christian life, by considering those of a military one.

And on the very first onset I am reminded of a military term applied to preachers and teachers of Christianity, and one therefore which I may consider addressed as a warning and direction to myself.

The Christian minister is not to be wrapped up in his own learning. He must consider those whom he has to teach. He must level himself to their capacities. And not only must he choose subjects which they can under-

stand, but he must deliver what he has to say in intelligible language. And to express all this, and lay down a rule for all preachers, in all places, and at all times, St. Paul says, asking a question, but giving a solid instruction, "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for the battle?"

The text I have chosen will not be deemed inappropriate to such a congregation as this, and I hope, that by simple, and plain, and homely language, I shall make myself well understood, so that, not one of all those who are assembled here may go away without receiving some profitable instruction, and having some godly reflections awakened in his breast, which may abide there to fructify in good works to the end of life.

Observe now, my brethren, you are called upon to attend muster,—you are there to learn what you are to do,—you are to receive commands,—you are to hear instructions,—nay, if there is nothing to be done, and you are ordered on to parade, you must go. No excuse, except under dire necessity, can be allowed. Not to be present would be an act of insubordination to be punished.

Now, as Christians, you are called upon to visit God in his sanctuary every Sabbath day. There is no one here, but will allow that the Sabbath ought to be kept holy. And, I ask, can you keep it holy when you do not attend the sanctuary? In the law of Moses, the one duty is made, as it were, part of the other,—both duties are interlaced together, so that to keep the one we must of necessity keep the other also. The command is, "Thou shalt keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary." The Sabbath was not intended as a day of idleness. I may call it God's muster day,—it is the day when Christians are to meet on parade,—they are on this day to be informed of their several duties. They are to listen to their commanding officers. And they are to listen with the intention of being obedient, and seriously determined to carry the commands delivered into effect.

I said, if there was nothing to be done on parade, and you were ordered to go, that it would be your duty to do so. Christians have other things to do on the Sabbath besides being instructed from the pulpit. They have need of pardon, and therefore have need of prayer. They have need also of Divine help, even let their intentions be ever so good. "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." We should come to church, therefore, if it be only to ask for grace. But further, our religion is in some measure a symbolical religion. We are to show forth our "Lord's death till he come." We ought to testify our faith in him and show forth our gratitude, by going to his holy table, and partaking of the emblems of his body broken and his blood shed. These are duties that cannot conveniently, or so conveniently be performed at home as at church. You are assembled here to-day, but your duty is to arrange so as to spend every Sabbath as you are now spending this. The very coming to church, if you

are rightly minded, suggests holy thoughts. And it is God's command that you should come; and I must ask you in seriousness, whether you can expect his blessing, if you do not obey his commands! On this head, I trust that you will feel that I have spoken in no uncertain terms, I have given no "uncertain sound," and, I trust, therefore, that when you depart from this muster, you will go with a resolution to do your duty.

I must remind you further, that when you become soldiers, you enlist, or obtain commissions. Your names are enrolled. You thus bind yourselves to the service of your Queen and country. You forsake other avocations and give yourselves up to arms. The words which follow those which I have chosen for my text describe your condition. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." 'This is not the condition exactly of you whom I am now addressing, but should you be called into active service, it is what your condition would be. And you have taken the first step towards its being realized in you. You have dedicated yourselves to arms, and should your services in a more active sphere even be required, you would, I make no doubt, willingly and heartily give them.

Well! have you not also dedicated yourselves to Christ! have you not enlisted under his banner! have not your names been enrolled as members of his church! have you not been baptised in his name! What then is required of you from this relationship! I cannot better describe your duty than by citing a few words to you from our Baptismal Service. The words are an instruction, more especially to godfathers and godmothers, but at the same time they set forth, what the duties of true Christians are. You promised then at baptism, not only to "believe in God," but "to serve him." As you have bound yourselves to serve your country, so you have solemnly bound yourselves at your baptism to serve God. You are to learn his will and do it. And that you may learn his will, you must attend muster,—you must visit the sanctuary and listen to the preacher, and not only listen to the preacher but to God's own word read. As it is your duty to endeavour to know what is required of you as soldiers, so it is equally your duty to endeavour to learn what your duties are as Christians. And when you have learnt them, you are in hearty prayer to kneel down and ask God to give you grace to do them.

The great characteristic of the great commander, whose venerated ashes are deposited in the gorgeous tomb, in the crypt over which we are now assembled, was duty. Duty with him was everything. In this ruling idea he forgot self, and he forgot also the selfish feelings of others. Whatever he saw it was his duty to do, he did. And what he saw was the duty of others, he insisted that they should do too. And those who would be good soldiers of Jesus Christ, must in this follow his example. They must inquire of God's word what their duty is, and then resolutely determine to do it. That

great commander, when he was Prime Minister, as I know from personal knowledge, was up every Sunday morning, and went to his devotions to the Chapel Royal by eight o'clock. He went to say his prayers, and receive the commands of his heavenly master. And if you would be good soldiers, you must not waste that day, which he ; though on his mind, at that time, rested the cares of this great kingdom ; thus marked with his special veneration.

Your military discipline reminds me also of another circumstance. Every soldier follows in the steps of his comrade. In marching, you each follow your leader. And what says the Scripture to us, when exhorting to the duties of Christianity ? Why simply this. It tells us to walk in the steps of good men. And all are exhorted to follow the steps of Christ. St. Paul, conscious that he was walking in the way of life, says to those whom he addressed, "Be ye followers of me !" But then he professes at the same time, that he himself is a follower of Christ. And our Lord says, exhorting on the same subject, "I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you."

And if we are to walk in the steps of good men, it is plain that we should avoid the steps of bad men. They can only lead us into evil, and in the end peril our eternal happiness.

I must remind you, that when you undertook to be Christians,—when you enlisted yourselves, or were enlisted under Christ's banner,—this was one of the duties you bound yourselves to perform. "Baptism," says our Baptismal Service, "doth represent unto us our profession ; which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him ;—that, as he died, and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness : continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living."

And this brings me home more especially to the words of the text. Our Christian course is represented in this text as a struggle,—it sets forth that we shall have difficulties to contend with. It does not represent the discharge of Christian duties, as being an easy matter, but as one, which requires resolution, and firmness, and labour. It represents it in short as a kind of warfare, and it entreats us to harden ourselves for the contest.

In this world the Christian has many enemies to contend with. First, there is our own natural corruption. We have minds and bodies naturally inclined to evil. And in this respect Christianity is from first to last a contest or warfare against self. Then further, we are beset with outward temptations. The world is full of them. The young and the unwary are often betrayed into sins, which if left to themselves, they would have avoided. But the devil is allowed thus to tempt us, as he did our Lord himself. Then further, the world abounds with bad examples. And walk therefore where we may, we walk in danger. We can only be prepared for the contest by polishing our arms in the sanctuary.

We read of our Lord himself, that before he was tempted, in that great scene of his temptation with Satan, he had been filled with the Spirit. - Even he had prepared himself for the contest by spiritual discipline. And this, my brethren, is an instruction to us. Before we commit ourselves to the world and its temptations, and mix in that general company where the bad so much abound, we should by spiritual discipline prepare ourselves for the difficulties and trials we shall have to encounter. To go into the world unprepared, is to deliver ourselves over to Satan's will, and to go blindfold into the temptations he has laid for us.

And is not this a reason, my brethren, why you should attend church !—listen to and study God's word !—exercise yourselves in public and private prayer !—seek grace in the communion !—and make a conscience of spending every Sabbath as you are now spending this !

We have an account of at least one devout soldier in God's word. We read of "Cornelius, a centurion of the band, called the Italian band," that he was "a devout man and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway."

Observe, he "prayed to God alway,"—he attended not merely to his public but to his private devotions,—he prayed not only for pardon but for grace,—he not only sought that the past might be forgiven, but that holpen by the Divine Spirit, his future life might be more holy. And observe, that in thus acting he showed that he relied not on his own strength, but that after hearing God's will he thought it necessary to seek help from heaven to enable him to do it. And as he was a soldier, he ought to be your example.

But, then further, he "feared God with all his house." Doubtless, like Joshua, his resolution had been long fixed and acted upon, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." He looked not merely to his own salvation, but to the salvation of all about him. He walked in the steps of father Abraham : of whom, God foreseeing his faith, thus spake, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." Such was Cornelius, he was not selfish in his religion, but sought to bring all with whom he was connected into the same happy state of sonship with God as himself.

My brethren, you see that you have not merely a duty owing to yourselves, but to your households. You should endeavour to make your families religious, and especially are you to see that your children be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

But Cornelius' duties were not confined to prayer and attention to his household, he extended his thoughts to others, and endeavoured to do them good, and that in the most substantial way, by helping them with his purse. He gave, says the divine historian, "much alms to the people." Even the very humblest may show kindness to their neighbours,—sympathy itself is a

kindness,—and friendly help is sometimes of more value than money, nay, there are kind deeds which money cannot purchase. Taking Cornelius, then, as your example, you are to be kind to one another, and not merely to one another, but to all with whom you may come in contact. Give alms, if you can, but if you have no alms to give, give your sympathy and attention.

All that I have now done, has been to give you a few hints as to what you ought to do; I have dwelt on no abstruse subjects, nor spoken to you in unintelligible language, but have dealt with you with plainness. The fact is, my duty, let me be placed where I may, is to set forth God's word, and apply it to the hearts of my hearers. This has been my object with you. Bear in mind, therefore, that inasmuch as I have only spoken God's word, God has been now speaking to you by me. Put it not from you, therefore, but consider it as a message from him, and let that much of it, which in your consciences you have approved, have an effect upon your conduct, and lead you to some of the godly practices which I have suggested.

I cannot conclude without adding one word more. As things are arranged now in our army; crosses, and medals, and ribbons, and other honours of a more substantial sort are distributed to those who distinguish themselves for heroic exploits. But all these honours will perish with the using. Both the honours themselves and those that are decorated with them will soon have passed away, and both they and their exploits will be forgotten.

But the honours for which Christians contend will be immortal,—themselves will live and their decorations shall last for ever. And mark, whatever good we do in this world will never be blotted out of God's memory. God will not forget our works and labour which proceedeth of love. The crown any one shall in the Christian warfare win, he shall wear for ever. The earthly soldier, as such, can only attain to a corruptible crown, but the Christian soldier to an incorruptible.

Think, then, my brethren, of the glorious home to which you are invited through Jesus Christ, think of the imperishable honours to which you may attain,—think of the happiness of being blessed amongst the blessed, and even being more blessed than they. And ask yourselves whether such honours are not worth contending for! And should you think they are, then take the advice given in the text, and whatever may be the difficulties you may have to contend with in seeking such glorious rewards, yet endeavour to encounter them, and resolve to “endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.”

The New Park Street Pulpit.

DEARLY BELOVED,

It hath pleased the Lord by a painful illness to interrupt for a little while my usual labors. As I was unable to preach last Lord's day, except this week the issue of an old sermon. Though it has been buried in my publishers' warehouse for two years, I pray God it may bud afresh and bring forth fruit, even as old corn after having been entombed in Egyptian sepulchres for centuries will often germinate again and yield an abundant crop. Ye have prayed for me. The Lord hath visited me in the chamber of affliction. I am recovering; and God knoweth "I long to see you, and impart unto you some spiritual gift;" and I trust that ere long "through your prayers I shall be given unto you." Yours in much affection,—C. H. S.

AN APPEAL TO SINNERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, SEPTEMBER 14TH, 1856, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"This man receiveth sinners."—Luke xv. 2.

It was a singular group which had gathered round our Saviour, when these words were uttered; for we are told by the evangelist—"Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." The publicans—the very lowest grade, the public oppressors, scorned and hated by the meanest Jew—these, together with the worst of characters, the scum of the streets and the very riff-raff of the society of Jerusalem, came around this mighty preacher, Jesus Christ, in order to listen to his words. On the outside of the throng there stood a few respectable people, who in those days were called Pharisees and Scribes—men who were highly esteemed in the synagogues as rulers, and governors, and teachers. These looked with scorn upon the Preacher; and watched him with invidious eyes, to find some fault. If they could find none in him personally, yet they could easily find it in his congregation; his deportment towards them shocked their false notion of propriety, and when they observed that he was affable with the very worst of characters, that he spoke loving words to the most fallen of mankind, they said of him what they intended for a disgrace, albeit it was highly to his honour: "This man receiveth sinners." I believe that our Saviour could not have wished to have had a sentence uttered concerning him, more evidently true or more thoroughly consistent with his sacred commission. It is the exact portrait of his character; the hand of a master seems to have limned him to the very life. He is the man who "receiveth sinners." Many a true word has been spoken in jest, and many a true word has been spoken in slander. Men have said sometimes in jest, "There goes a saint;" but it has been true. They have said, "There goes one of your chosen ones, one of your elect;" they meant it as a slander, but the doctrine they scandalized was to the person who received it a comfort; it was his glory and his honour. Now the Scribes and Pharisees wished to slander Christ; but in so doing they outstripped their intentions, and bestowed upon him a title of renown. "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

This evening I shall divide my observations to you into three parts. First, *the doctrine, that Christ receiveth sinners, which is a doctrine of holy writ.* Secondly, *the encouragement it affords the sinner; and thirdly, the exhortation naturally springing from it, to the same character.*

I. First, then, **THE DOCTRINE.** The doctrine is, not that Christ receiveth everybody, but that he "receiveth sinners." By that term we, in common parlance, understand everybody. It is in the present day quite fashionable for everybody to lie against what he believes, and to say he is a sinner, even when he believes himself to be a very respectable, well-to-do man, and does not conceive that he ever did anything very amiss in his life. It is a sort of orthodox confession for men to make, when they say that they are sinners; though they might just as well use one formula as another, or repeat words in a foreign tongue; for they mean no deep and heartfelt contrition. They have no true apprehension that they are sinners at all. These Scribes and Pharisees did virtually assert, that they were not sinners; they marked out the Publicans and the harlots, and the worthless, and

they said, "These are sinners, we are not." "Very well," said Christ; "I endorse the distinction you have made. In your own opinion, you are not sinners; well, you shall stand exempt for the time from being called sinners—I endorse your distinction. But I beg to inform you, that I came to save those *very* persons who, in their own estimation and in yours, are reckoned to be sinners." It is my belief that the doctrine of the text is this—that Christ receives not the self-righteous, not the good, not the whole-hearted, not those who dream that they do not need a Saviour; but the broken in spirit, the contrite in heart—those who are ready to confess that they have broken God's laws, and have merited his displeasure. These and these alone, Christ came to save; and I reassert the subject of last Sabbath evening—that Jesus has died for such, and for none other; that he has shed his blood for those who are ready to confess their sins, and who do seek mercy through the open veins of his wounded body, but for none other did he designedly offer up himself upon the cross.

Now, let us remark, beloved, that there is a very wise distinction on the part of God, that he hath been pleased thus to choose and call *sinners* to repentance, and not others. For this reason, none but these ever do come to him. There has never been such a miracle as a self-righteous man coming to Christ for mercy; none but those who want a Saviour ever did come. It stands to reason, that when men do not consider themselves in need of a Saviour, they never will approach his throne; and surely it is satisfactory enough for all purposes, that Christ should say he receiveth sinners, seeing that sinners are the only persons who will ever come to him for mercy, and therefore it would be useless for him to say that he would receive any but those who most assuredly will come.

And mark, again, none but those *can* come; no man can come to Christ until he truly knows himself to be a sinner. The self-righteous man cannot come to Christ; for what is implied in coming to Christ? Repentance, trust in his mercy, and the denial of all confidence in one's self. Now, a self-righteous man cannot repent, and yet be self-righteous. He conceives that he has no sin; why, then, should he repent? Tell him to come to Christ with humble penitence, and he exclaims—"Ay! you insult my dignity. Why should I approach to God? Wherein have I sinned? My knee shall not bend to seek for pardon, wherein I have not offended; this lip shall not seek forgiveness when I do not believe myself to have transgressed against God; I shall not ask for mercy." The self-righteous man cannot come to God; for his coming to God implies that he ceases to be self-righteous. Nor can a self-righteous man put his trust in Christ: why should he? Shall I trust in a Christ whom I do not require? If I be self-righteous, I need no Christ to save me in my own opinion. How, then, can I come with such a confession as this,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,"

when I have got my hands full. How can I say, "Wash me," when I believe myself white? How can I say "Heal me," when I think that I never was sick? How can I cry, "Give me freedom, give me liberty," when I believe I never was a slave, and "never in bondage to any man?" It is only the man who knows his slavery by reason of the bondage of sin, and the man who knows himself to be sick even unto death by reason of the sense of guilt: it is only the man who feels he cannot save himself, who can with faith rely upon the Saviour. Nor can the self-righteous man renounce himself, and lay hold of Christ; because in the renunciation of himself he would at once become the very character whom Christ says he will receive. He would then put himself in the place of the sinner, when he cast away his own righteousness. Why, sirs, coming to Christ implies the taking off the polluted robe of our own righteousness, and putting on Christ's. How can I do that, if I wittingly wrap my own garment about me? and if in order to come to Christ I must forsake my own refuge and all my own hope, how can I do it, if I believe my hope to be good, and my refuge to be secure; and if I suppose that already I am clothed sufficiently to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb? Nay, beloved, it is the sinner, and the sinner only, who can come to Christ; the self-righteous man cannot do it; it is quite out of his way—he would not do it if he could. His very self-righteousness fetters his foot, so that he cannot come; palsies his arm, so that he cannot take hold of Christ; and blinds his eye, so that he cannot see the Saviour.

Yet another reason: if these people, who are not sinners, would come to Christ, Christ would get no glory from them. When the physician openeth his door for those who are sick, let me go there full of health; he can win no honour

from me, because he cannot exert his skill upon me. The benevolent man may distribute all his wealth to the poor; but let some one go to him who has abundance, and he shall win no esteem from him for feeding the hungry, or for clothing the naked; since the applicant is neither hungry nor naked. If Jesus Christ proclaims that he giveth his grace unto all who come for it, surely it is sufficient, seeing that none will or can come for it, but those whose pressing necessities prompt them. Ayl sufficient; it is quite sufficient for his honour. A great sinner brings great glory to Christ when he is saved. A man who is no sinner, if he could attain to heaven would glorify himself, but he would not glorify Christ. The man who has no stains may plunge into the fountain; but he cannot magnify its cleansing power, for he hath no stains to wash away. He that hath no guilt can never magnify the word "forgiveness." It is the sinner then, and the sinner only, who can glorify Christ; and hence "this man receiveth sinners," but it is not said that he receiveth any else. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." This is the doctrine of the text.

But allow us just to amplify that word: "this man receiveth sinners." Now, by that we understand that he receives sinners to all the benefits which he has purchased for them. If there be a fountain, he receives sinners to wash them in it; if there be medicine for the soul, he receives sinners to heal their diseases; if there be a house for the sick, an hospital, a lazar-house for the dying, he receives such into that retreat of mercy. All that he hath of love, all that he hath of mercy, all that he hath of atonement, all that he hath of sanctification, all that he hath of righteousness—to all these he receives the sinner. Yea, more; not content with taking him to his house, he receives him to his heart. He takes the black and filthy sinner, and having washed him—"There," he says, "thou art my beloved; my desire is towards thee." And to consummate the whole, at last he receives the saints to heaven. Saints, I said, but I meant those who were sinners, for none can be saints truly, but those who once were sinners, and have been washed in the blood of Christ, and made white through the sacrifice of the lamb.

Observe it then, beloved, that in receiving sinners we mean the whole of salvation; and this word in my text, "Christ receiveth sinners," graspeth in the whole of the covenant. He receives them to the joys of paradise, to the bliss of the beatified, to the songs of the glorified, to an eternity of happiness for ever. "This man receiveth sinners;" and I dwell with special emphasis on this point,—he receives none else. He will have none else to be saved but those who know themselves to be sinners. Full, free salvation is preached to every sinner in the universe; but I have no salvation to preach to those who will not acknowledge themselves to be sinners. To them I must preach the law, telling them that their righteousness is but as filthy rags, that their goodness shall pass away as the spider's web, and shall be broken in pieces, even as the egg of the ostrich is broken by the foot of the horse. "This man receiveth sinners," and receiveth none else.

II. Now, then, THE ENCOURAGEMENT. If this man receiveth sinners, poor sin-sick sinner, what a sweet word this is for thee! Sure, then, he will not reject thee. Come, let me encourage thee this night to come to my Master, to receive his great atonement, and to be clothed with all his righteousness. Mark: those whom I address, are the *bona fide*, real, actual sinners; not the complimentary sinners; not those who say they are sinners by way of pacifying, as they suppose, the religionists of the day; but I speak to those who feel their lost, ruined, hopeless condition. All these are now frankly and freely invited to come to Jesus Christ, and to be saved by him. Come, poor sinner, come.

Come, because he has said he will receive you; I know your fears; we all felt them once, when we were coming to Christ. I know thou sayest in thy heart, "He will reject me. If I present my prayer, he will not hear me; if I cry unto him, yet peradventure the heavens will be as brass; I have been so great a sinner, that he will never take me into his house to dwell with him." Poor sinner! say not so; he hath published the decree. It is enough between man and man usually, if we count our fellow creatures honest, to obtain a promise. Sinner! is this not enough between thyself and the Son of God? He has said, "Him that cometh I will in nowise cast out." Durst thou not venture on that promise? Wilt thou not go to sea in a ship as staunch as this: he hath said it? It has been often and again the only comfort of the saints; on this they have lived, on this they have died: he hath said it. What! dost thou think Christ will lie unto thee? Would he tell thee he will receive thee, and yet not do so? Would he say, "My failings are killed, come ye to

the supper," and yet shut the door in your face? No, if he has said he will cast out none that come to him; rest assured he cannot, he will not cast you out. Come, then, try his love on this ground, that he has said it.

Come, and fear not, because remember, if thou feelest thyself to be a sinner, that feeling is God's gift; and therefore thou mayest very safely come to one who has already done so much to draw thee. A stranger calls at my house, he asks for alms, and he tells me at first very plainly, that he never saw me before, that he has no claim upon my generosity, but he throws himself entirely upon any benevolent feeling that I may chance to have in my breast. But if I had done anything for him before, he might say, supposing I were a rich man, "Sir, you have done so much for me, I think you will not give me up at last; I believe you will not let me starve, after so much love." Poor sinner! if thou feelest thy need of a Saviour, Christ made thee feel it; if thou hast a wish to come after Christ, Christ gave thee that wish; if thou hast any desire after God, God gave thee that desire; if thou canst sigh after Christ, Christ made thee sigh; if thou canst weep after Christ, Christ made thee weep. Ay, if thou canst only wish for him with the strong wish of one that fears he never can find, yet hopes he may—if thou canst but hope for him, he has given thee that hope. And oh! wilt not thou come to him? Thou hast some of the king's bounties about thee now; come and plead what he hath done; there is no suit that can ever fail with God, when ye plead this. Tell him his past mercies urge you to try him in the future. Down on your knees, sinner, down on your knees; tell him this—"Lord, I thank thee that I know myself to be a sinner; thou hast taught me that; I bless thee that I do not wrap up my sin, that I know it, that I feel it; that it is ever before me. Lord, wouldst thou make me see my sin, and not let me see my Saviour? What! wilt thou open the wound, and put in the lancet, and yet not heal me? What, Lord! hast thou said, 'I kill!' And hast thou not said in the same breath, 'I make alive.' Hast thou killed me, and wilt thou not make me alive?" Plead that, poor sinner, and thou wilt find it true, that "this man receiveth sinners."

Doth not this suffice thee? Then here is another reason. I am sure "this man receiveth sinners," because he has received many, many, before you. See, there is Mercy's door; mark how many have been to it; you can almost hear the knocks upon the door now, like echoes of the past. You may remember how many way-worn travellers have called there for rest, how many famished souls have applied there for bread. Go, knock at Mercy's door, and ask the porter this question, "Was there ever one applied to the door that was refused?" I can assure you of the answer: "No, not one."

"No sinner was ever empty sent back,
Who came seeking mercy for Jesus's sake."

And shalt thou be the first? Dost thou think God will forfeit his good name, by turning thee away? Mercy's gate has been open night and day, ever since man sinned; dost thou think it will be shut in thy face for the first time? Nay, man, go and try it; and if thou findest it is, come back and say, "Thou hast not read the Bible as thou oughtest to have done;" or else say thou hast found one promise there which has not been fulfilled—for he said, "Him that cometh I will in nowise cast out." I do not believe there ever was in this world one who was suffered by God to say that he sought mercy of him sincerely, and did not find it. Nay more, I believe that such a being never shall exist, but whosoever cometh unto Christ shall most assuredly find mercy. What greater encouragement do you want? Do you want a salvation for those that will not come to be saved? Do you want blood sprinkled on those that will not come to Christ? You must want it, then; I will not preach it to you. I find it not in God's Word, and therefore I dare not.

And now, sinner, I have yet another plea to urge with thee why thou shouldst believe that Christ will receive all sinners who come to him. It is this, that he calls all such. Now if Christ calls us and bids us come, we may be sure he will not turn us away when we do come. Once on a time a blind man sat by the wayside begging. He heard—for he could not see—he heard the trampling of the many feet that were passing by him. He asked what all this meant: they said that Jesus of Nazareth passed by. Loudly did he cry, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!" The ear of mercy was apparently deaf, and the Saviour walked on and heeded not the prayer. The poor man sat still then, but cried aloud, though he

did not move. Yet when the Saviour said, "Come hither," ah! then he did not delay an instant. They said, "Arise, he calleth thee;" and, pushing them all aside, he made his way through the crowd, and offered the prayer, "Lord, let me receive my sight." Well, then, thou who feelest thyself to be lost and ruined, arise and speak; he calleth for thee. Convinced sinner, Christ says, "Come;" and that thou mayest be sure he says it, let us quote that Scripture again, "I came not to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance." Thou art called, man; then come. If Her Majesty were riding by, thou mightest scarcely presume to speak to her; but if thy name were called, and by her own lips, wouldst thou not go to her carriage, and what she had to say to thee wouldst thou not listen to? Now, the King of heaven says, "Come." Yes, the same lips that will one day say, "Come, ye blessed," say this night, "Come, ye poor distressed sinners, come to me, and I will save you." There is not a distressed soul in this hall, if his distress be the work of God's Holy Spirit, that shall not find salvation in the wounds of Christ. Believe then, sinner, believe in Jesus, that he is able to save even thee unto the very uttermost.

And now just one point more, to commend this encouragement to you. Indeed, poor souls, I know when ye are under a sense of sin it is very hard to believe. We sometimes say, "Only believe;" but believing is just the hardest thing in the world when sin lies heavy on your shoulders. We say, "Sinner, only trust in Christ." Ah, ye do not know what a great "only" that is. It is a work so great, that no man can do it unaided by God; for faith is the gift of God, and he gives it only to his children. But if anything can call faith into exercise, it is this last thing I shall mention. Sinner, remember that Christ is willing to receive thee, for he came all the way from heaven to seek thee and find thee out in thy wanderings, and to save thee and rescue thee from thy miseries; he hath given proof of his hearty interest in thy welfare, in that he hath shed his very heart's blood to redeem thy soul from death and hell. If he had wanted the companionship of saints, he might have stopped in heaven, for there were many there. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob were with him there in glory; but he wanted sinners. He had a thirst after perishing sinners. He wanted to make them trophies of his grace. He wanted black souls, to wash them white. He wanted dead souls, to make them alive. His benevolence wanted objects on which to exert itself; and therefore

"Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste he fled,
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead."

Oh, sinner, look there, and see that cross. Mark yonder man upon it!

"See from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

Dost thou note that eye? Canst thou see languid pity for thy soul floating in it? Dost thou mark that side? It is opened that thou mayest hide thy sins therein. See those drops of crimson blood; every drop is trickling down for thee. Hearst thou that death-shriek, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" That shriek in all its deep-toned solemnity is for thee. Yes, for thee, if thou art a sinner; if thou dost this night say unto God, "Lord, I know I have offended thee; have mercy upon me for Jesus' sake." If now, taught by the Spirit, thou art led to abhor thyself in dust and ashes, because thou hast sinned, verily, before God—I tell thee in his sight, as his servant, thou shalt be saved; for Jesus would not die for thee and yet let thee perish.

III. Now the last point is AN EXHORTATION. If it be true that Christ came only to save sinners, my beloved hearers, labour, strive, agonize, to get a sense in your souls of your own sinfulness. One of the most distressing things in the world is to feel yourself a sinner; but that is no reason why I should not exhort you to seek it, for while distressing, it is only the distress of the bitter medicine which will effectually work the cure. Do not seek to get high ideas of yourself. Seek to get a low opinion of yourself; do not try to deck yourself with ornaments; let it not be your endeavour to array yourself in gold and silver; do not seek to be made good in yourself, but seek to strip yourself; seek to humble yourself. Do not soar high, but sink low. Do not go up, but go down. Ask God to let thee see

that thou art nothing at all. Ask him to bring thee to this, that thou mayest have nothing to say but

"I the chief of sinners am;"

and if God hear your prayer, very likely Satan will tell you that you cannot be saved because you are a sinner. But as Martin Luther said, "Once, when I was racked with pain and sin, Satan said, 'Luther, thou canst not be saved, for thou art a sinner.' 'Nay,' said Martin Luther, 'I will cut thine head off with thine own sword. Thou sayest I am a sinner; I thank thee for it. Thou art a holy Satan,' (he says it in mockery no doubt.) 'when thou sayest I am a sinner. Well, then, Satan, Christ died for sinners, therefore he died for me. Ah,' said he, 'if thou canst but prove that to me, Satan, I will thank thee for it; and so far from groaning, I will begin to sing, for all we want is to know and feel that we are sinners.'" Let us feel that; let us know that, and we may receive this as an undoubted fact of revelation, that we have a right to come unto Christ, and to believe on him, and receive him as all our salvation, and all our desire. No doubt Conscience will come and stop you; but do not try to stop the mouth of Conscience, but tell Conscience you are much obliged to him for all that he says 'Oh, you have been a desperate fellow; you sinned when you were young; you have sinned even until now. How many sermons have been wasted on you! How many Sabbaths you have broken! How many warnings you have despised! Oh, you are a desperate sinner.' Tell Conscience that you thank him, for the more you can prove yourself to be a sinner, not by outward acts, but in your inmost heart, the more you know yourself to be really guilty, the more reason have you to come to Christ and say, "Lord, I believe thou hast died for the guilty; I believe thou intendest to save the worthless. I cast myself on thee; Lord, save me!" That does not suit some of you, does it? It is not the kind of doctrine that flatters man much. No; ye would like to be good people, and help Christ a little, ye like that theory which some ministers are always proclaiming. "God has done a great deal for you; you do the rest, and then you will be saved." That is a very popular kind of doctrine; you do one part, and God will do the other part; but that is not God's truth; it is only a delirious dream; God says, "I will do the whole; come and prostrate thyself at my feet; give up thy doings; let me undertake for thee; afterwards, I will make thee live to my glory. Only in order that thou mayest be holy, I desire thee to confess that thou art unholy; in order that thou mayest be sanctified, thou must confess that thou art as yet un sanctified. Oh, do that my hearers. Fall down before the Lord; cast yourselves down. Do not stand up with pride; but fall down before God in humility; tell him you are undone without his sovereign grace; tell him you have nothing, you are nothing, you never will be anything more than nothing, but that you know Christ does not want anything of you, for he will take you just as you are. Do not seek to come to Christ with anything, besides your sin; do not seek to come to Christ with your prayers for a recommendation; do not come to him even with professions of your faith; come to him with your sin, he will give you faith. If you stop away from Christ, and think that you will have faith apart from him, you have made an error. It is Christ that saves us; we must come to Christ for all we want."

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want;

All in All in thee I find:

Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,

Heal the sick, and lead the blind."

Jesus will do so and more also; but you must come as blind, you must come as sick, you must come as lost, or else you cannot and must not come at all.

Come then, to Jesus, I beseech you, whatever may up to this time have kept you away. Your doubts would keep you away, but say, "Stand back, Unbelief; Christ says he died for sinners: and I know I am a sinner."

"My faith will on that promise live,

Will on that promise die."

And there is one thing I want to say, before I have done. Do not stop away from Christ, when you know yourself to be a sinner, because you think you do not understand every point of theology. Very often I get young converts with me, and they say, "I do not understand this or that doctrine." Well, I am very glad,

so far as I am able, to explain it to them. But sometimes I get, not young converts, but young *convicts*, those who are under conviction of sin; and when I am trying to bring them to this, that if they are but sinners they may believe in Christ, they begin with this knotty point, and that knotty point—and they seem to imagine that they cannot be saved till they are thorough theologians. Now, if you expect to understand all theology before you put your faith in Christ, I can only tell you you never will; for live as long as ever you may, there will be some depths you cannot explore. There are certain unquestionable facts which you must hold; but there will always be some difficulties through which you will not be able to see. The most favoured saint on earth does not understand everything; but you want to understand all things before you come to Christ. One man asks me how sin came into the world, and he will not come unto Christ till he knows that. Why, he will be lost beyond hope of recovery, if he waits till he knows it; for nobody will ever know it. I have no reason to believe that it is even revealed to those who are in heaven. Another wants to know how it is that men are bidden to come,—and yet we are taught in Scripture that no man can come,—and he must have that cleared up; just as if the poor man who had a withered arm, when Christ said, “Stretch out thine arm,” had replied, “Lord, I have got a difficulty in my mind; I want to know how you can tell me to stretch out my arm when it is withered.” Suppose when Christ had said to Lazarus, “Come forth,” Lazarus could have said, “I have a difficulty in my mind; how can a dead man come forth?” Why, know this, vain man! when Christ says “Stretch out thine arm,” he gives you power to stretch out your arm with the command, and the difficulty is solved in practice; though I believe it never will be solved in theory. If men want to have theology mapped out to them, as they would have a map of England; if they want to have every little village and every hedgerow in the gospel kingdom mapped out to them, they will not find it anywhere but in the Bible; and they will find it so mapped out there that the years of a Methuselah would not suffice to find out every little thing in it. We must come to Christ and learn, not learn and then come to Christ. “Ah! but,” saith another, “that is not the ground of my misgivings; I do not perplex myself much about theological points; I have got a worse anxiety than that: I feel I am too bad to be saved.” Well, I believe you are wrong then; that is all I can say in reply to you; for I will believe Christ before I will believe you. You say you are too bad to be saved; Christ says, “Him that cometh he will in no wise cast out.” Now, which shall be right? Christ saith he will receive the very worst; you say he will not. What then? “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” But there is one matter of counsel I wish you would accept; I desire of God that he may bring you to come and try the Lord Jesus Christ, and see whether he will turn you away. What concern is it to me, that I am so often reproached for making my appeals to the worst of sinners? It is said that I direct my ministry to drunkards, harlots, blasphemers, and sinners of the grosser sort. And what if the finger of scorn be pointed at me, or if I shall be accounted as a fool before the public; do you think I shall be deterred by their irony? Do you think I shall stand abashed at their ungenerous ridicule? Oh, no: like David, when he danced before the ark of the Lord, and Michal, Saul’s daughter, jeered at him and taunted him as a shameless fellow, I shall only reply, if this be vile, I purpose to be more vile yet. While I see the foot-tracks of my Master before me, and while I see still more his gracious sanctions following my labours; while I behold his name magnified, his glory increased, and perishing souls saved, (as thanks be to God we have witness every-day,) while this gospel warrants me, while the Spirit of God moves me, and while signs following do multiply the seals of my commission,—who am I that I should stay myself for man, or resist the Holy Ghost for any flesh that breatheth? Oh, then, ye chief of sinners, ye vilest of the vile, ye who are the scum of the city, the refuse of the earth, the dregs of creation, whom no man seeketh after, ye whose characters are destroyed, and whose inmost souls are polluted, so black that no fuller on earth can whiten you, so debased that ye have sunk beyond the hope of an moralist to reclaim you! come ye—come ye to Christ. Come ye at his own invitation. Come, and you shall be surely received with a hearty welcome. My Master said that he received sinners. His enemies said it of him, “This man receiveth sinners.” In deed and in truth we know of a surety that he does receive sinners, the enemies themselves being witnesses. Come now, and yield the fullest credit to his word, his invitation, his promise. Do you object that it was only

during a few days' grace in the time of his sojourn on earth that he received sinners? No, not so; it is confirmed by all subsequent experience. The apostles of Jesus echoed it after he had ascended into heaven, in terms as unqualified as he himself expressed it when on earth. Will ye not believe this: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief?" Ye despisers, go away and laugh at this; go away, and scorn the preached gospel if you will; but one day we shall meet each other, face to face, before our Maker, and it may, perhaps, go hard then with all those who have despised Christ, and laughed at his gracious words. Is there an infidel here who says he shall be well enough off if he shall die the death of annihilation, and shall not live in a future world? Well, my friend, suppose all men die like dogs, I shall be as well off as you are, and I think a little better off, even as to happiness and peace in this world. But if, (and mark you I do not put it so, because I doubt it)—if it be true that there is a world to come, I would not like to stand in your place in the next world. Be it so that there is a judgment-seat; let there be a hell—(I put it hypothetically, not because I have a doubt about it, but because you tell me you doubt it; though I do not think you really do)—if there be such a place, what will ye do then? Why, even now ye shake if a leaf falls in the night; ye are terrified if the cholera is in the street; ye are alarmed if ye are a little sick, and ye rush to the physician, and anyone can impose upon you with his physic, because you are afraid of death. What will you do in the swellings of Jordan, when death gets hold on you? If a little pain affrights you now, what will you do when your body shall shake, and your knees shall knock together before your Maker? What wilt thou do, my bearer, when his burning eyes shall eat into thy very soul? What wilt thou do, when, amid ten thousand thunders, he shall say, "Depart, depart?" I cannot tell thee what thou wilt do; but I will tell thee one thing that thou durst not do; that is, thou durst not say, that I have not as simply as ever I could tried to preach the gospel to the very chief of sinners. Hear it again—"He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." To believe is to trust in Christ; to drop into those blessed arms that can catch the heaviest laden sinner that ever breathed; to fall flat on the promise; to let him do all for you, until he has quickened you, and enabled you to work out what he has before worked in you, "your own salvation;" and even this must be "with fear and trembling." God almighty grant, that some poor soul may be blessed to-night! You that are on shore, I do not expect to do you any good. If I have a rocket to send abroad into the sea, it is only the stranded vessel, the shipwrecked mariner that will rejoice at the rope. You that think yourselves safe, I have no necessity to preach to you; you are all so perilously good in your own sight, it is no use trying to make you better; you are all so awfully righteous, you can go on your way well enough, without warning from me. You must excuse me, therefore, if I have nothing to say to you except this, "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" and allow me to turn myself to another class of people, the vilest of the vile. I should not care if I gained the cognomen of the preacher to the basest and the vilest; I should not blush to be reviled like Rowland Hill, as the preacher to the lowest orders; for they want the gospel as much as any creatures under heaven; and if nobody will preach it to them, God helping me, I will endeavour to preach it to them in words that they can understand. And if genteel people do not like preaching in that style, they have the option of leaving it. If they want to hear men preach in intellectual strains, above the capacity of common sinners, let them go and hear them; I must content myself with following my Lord, who "made himself of no reputation,"—to go after out-of-the-way sinners, in an out-of-the-way fashion. I would sooner do violence to pulpit decorum, and break through pulpit decency, than not break through hard hearts. I count that sort of preaching to be the right sort, that does reach the heart somehow or other, and I am not particular how I do it. I confess, if I could not preach in one way, I would in another; if nobody would come to hear me in a black coat, they should be attracted by my wearing a red one. Somehow or other, I would make them hear the gospel if I could; and I would labour so to preach, that the meanest understanding should be able to get hold of this one fact: "This man receiveth sinners." God bless you all, for Christ's sake!

THE HARVEST.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 3, 1858,

BY THE REV. HUGH ALLEN, M.A.

(Incumbent of St. Jude's, Whitechapel, and Divinity Lecturer of St. Olave's, Old Jewry.)

AT ST. JUDE'S CHURCH, WHITECHAPEL.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."—Psalm cxxvi. 6.

MEN and brethren, we are again assembled in the house of God under favourable circumstances: the minister is ready to preach the everlasting gospel, and here we are in health and strength, permitted to hear "the truth as it is in Jesus;" and let not then inattention of spirit, and let not carelessness of soul; let not worldly-mindedness, or the thoughts of the world; let not anything of a sublunary character interfere with the interesting occasion, the interesting place, and the solemn circumstances in which we are assembled. Every Sabbath is an interesting occasion, but more especially the present Sabbath, for how can we tell how many more such Sabbaths will be granted unto us? And the house where prayer is wont to be made, and where the gospel is preached, is a very interesting place to be assembled in. Here you are assembled where many a sermon has been preached, where many a sermon has been blessed; you are sitting in pews, upon benches, where others have sat before you, and have heard the word of God, and have been saved. Some of them have gone to foreign lands, to tell there the story of the cross, and others of them are scattered up and down the provinces; and a few of them have gone to heaven, to bless and praise God for evermore, for redeeming and sanctifying love, and that ever they heard the gospel of the Son of God preached unto them. We are thus met under the most favourable circumstances. The gospel, that was necessary for them, is necessary for you. The gospel, that was blessed to them, may be blessed to you. The gospel, that saved them, may save you. And there is no other gospel. If not saved by it, you cannot be saved at all. If you die without being saved by it, you die without the hope of being saved at all; without a hope beyond the grave, but of the worm that never dieth, and the fire that can never be quenched—and who would hope for that? Who would not tremble at the idea of that being their doom?

May the Lord bless what I am about to say to-night; and may this sermon be blessed to the conversion of many souls, and all be brought to heaven, to the everlasting glory hereafter! God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Our text introduces us to the consideration of sowing and of reaping—of casting the spiritual seed into the soil of the human soul, and of that glorious harvest, a harvest of saved souls which gladdens the church on earth, and will hereafter gladden the millions of the skies, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

We have to bring before you, first, the *sowing* of the seed; and, secondly, the *harvest*.

I. In considering the sowing of the seed, the precious seed of the gospel of the grace of God, we, in the *first place*, consider the text as representing the *labours of the faithful minister*. He goes forth, and weepeth, bearing precious seed. This, I say, represents very simply, but very fully the labours of the faithful minister of the gospel of the Son of God.

1. He "*goes*" forth; he does not dash into the office of the ministry without consideration; he does not rush to the position of an ambassador of Christ, without having duly and properly considered the sacred office, with all its requirements and responsibilities. He "*goes*" forth. There is an order in the expression which shows that the man is not sent by himself, but that he

is called of God, and he does not rush forth; but, it is said, "he goes forth." There is an order about it, which is not only the order of discipline, but an order which introduces to your notice the unction which the Holy Ghost gives to those whom he raises up to preach the everlasting gospel. He goes forth. He is well aware of his difficulties. He is well aware of his trials. He is well aware of all he has to meet with, and to do, and yet he goes forth; he has made up his mind, and he goes calmly, thoughtfully, steadily, under the Divine unction, yet, nevertheless, with determination, that, having put his hand to the gospel plough, he will never take it back; that, having gone forth to suffer, and to do all for Christ, he will never turn his back upon the sacred office, come what may, come trials, come oppositions, come difficulties, from whatever quarter they may come, he has made up his mind to go on, and cries out, like the Apostle, "I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."

2. Then it is said, further, that "*As weepeth.*" There is a very striking passage written by the Apostle Paul, to which I am anxious to draw your attention, in expounding this part of my text; it is in 1 Corinthians ii. 3, the Apostle thus writes—"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." This appears to me to be a very ample comment upon the expression of the text. He weepeth, first, because of his own essential weakness. It is essential to the success of a minister of religion that he be fully aware of his own weakness. The pomp of High-Churchism, the arrogance of the Confessional, the domination of the priesthood, are as antagonistic to the spiritual success of the ambassador of the gospel, as any opposites can be antagonistic to that success. The ambassador of Christ is to convert men, not to himself but to Christ, not to what he can do, but to what Christ hath done. His office is well expressed in the specimen of the preaching of John the Baptist, when it is recorded of him, that the matter and manner of his preaching was, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." The men who first preached Christianity were men who professed their weakness. One of them, who was a man of great learning, Paul, says, "I count all things but dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord." "God forbid," he exclaims, "that I should glory, save in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." He says, that he preached the everlasting gospel in plainness of speech, and in plainness of manner, proclaiming his own essential weakness. And he gives you the reason of all this, when he says, that he was striving to behave, and to do so, in order that "the faith of the believer should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of the living God." And in saying this, think not, that I undervalue the acquisitions of human learning, ancient and modern, classical and scientific, legal, and social; and all that figure in the beautiful fields of general literature. I, at least, should be most ungrateful, if I did so. I spent too much time most agreeably and profitably in one of the most ancient of the universities of our common country: I obtained too many of the rewards allotted to successful competitors in this interesting rivalry; and, to this very hour, I find myself too constantly drawing upon the literary stores, acquired in my collegiate career, ever to indulge in such an insane and depreciating cry. Yet, in preaching the gospel, not only must human wisdom be made subservient to the verities of Divine Inspiration, but in diction and style, the successful ambassador of Christ must closely follow the direction and guidance of the simple yet sublime words of the oracles of the Bible.

He weepeth, further, because of the difficulties which are in his way. The minister of religion is well aware of the difficulties, which lie in his path; he has himself been converted to God by the same gospel, and he is experimentally acquainted with the kind and number of difficulties to be encountered and overcome. And he is not only acquainted with general difficulties, but with the peculiar difficulties of place, prejudice, education, of previous views, and previous habits, and therefore he weeps and cries to God for help. He prays that the Holy Ghost may be sent down to aid him, to enable him to speak wisely, faithfully, and to prepare the minds of the people to receive the

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seed. There is no use in casting in the seed, except the ground is prepared. If the seed be sown by the way side, the devil will take it away; and if the seed be cast upon stony ground, then the oppositions which arise from the world, the persecutions that arise from the enemies of Christ, will mar the seed, and no fruit will come forth. Then again, if the seed be cast upon thorny ground, if the seed be cast where there is much prosperity, much worldly business, over-much employment to swallow up men's attention, then, except there be Divine help, the word will be choked. There must be the preparation of the soil, for it is not good by nature—it must be made good, it must be made fit to receive the seed, in order that, eventually, there may be fruit. And then he weeps, because of the *peril* of his hearers, because of the consequences of their rejecting the gospel which he preaches. Every minister of the gospel knows very well, that by every sermon that is preached the people are made better, or they are made worse—better, if they receive it; worse, if they neglect it; for they have thereby added another terrible sin to the fearful catalogue already against them. They have once more rejected the offer of the gospel, they have once more refused to be enticed for their own salvation; they have once more spurned Divine love, Divine mercy, Divine grace, and the offers of a free, full, and everlasting salvation, through the loving obedience, through the wondrous sufferings and death of Christ, the Son of the living God. Well, well, did the Apostle express himself on this subject, in these solemn words, “We are a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.” There is not a person in this church but will be the better or the worse for this sermon to-night! Oh! this makes the minister of religion weep, because every man who leaves the church, every man that leaves the gathering of people assembled to hear the gospel, every man and woman who leaves unimpressed, has neglected, despised, and rejected the offer of mercy—and thereby become worse than when they entered. Oh! my hearers, surely you are not going to leave the church to-night and be worse, but you will leave it and be better. You will embrace Christ, you will receive the gospel, you will be won by the invitations of the blessed Jesus, when he says, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” The solemn and affectionate remonstrances of Jehovah surely will not be spurned again, when he says, “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die? O house of Israel!” Oh! we want such ministers as the text describes, we do not want mere talkers, we do not want stiff priests, we do not want men to preach what they do not feel; we want men who preach their sermons with much earnestness and much anxiety—we want men to preach as the pious poet expresses it—

“I’ll preach, as if I ne’er should preach again—
I’ll preach, as dying, unto dying men.”

3. Notice also, he not only weeps, but he is *bearing precious seed*, that is, he holds up to the people the statements of the gospel, “God so loved the world, that he gave his Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” He presses upon the people’s attention this great and glorious gospel. It is a great gospel, because it gives a great blessing; it is a glorious gospel, for it will accomplish it by the love of the Father, and by the merit of the God-Man Son, and by the power of the Holy Ghost. O, yes, it is a gospel, great and glorious, and it is a gospel too, that is gloriously powerful which has saved, and can save every soul that will receive it. It is *precious seed*, it is *dear* and *costly*, for a moment consider and *estimate* it. The seed here spoken of means the word of God. This is the explanation given by the Saviour himself—“The seed is the word. And Jesus further says, “Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me;” and the Apostle John says of the word in the opening of his Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Then speaking of the Word, he says, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men:” and then in verse 14, he says, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only

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begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And then you read of the incarnation of this Son of God, the Word was made flesh, you read of his becoming a man, you read of him obeying the law, you read of his being tempted, you read of his being tried, you read of his surrendering everything that he may become a proper substitute for the sinner, that he may become a proper sin-offering for the sinner, that he may be able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. You read all about this Eternal Word coming into our world, becoming an infant; you see him in the manger at Bethlehem, the Infinite God joined to the finite creature, the weeping babe; you see the riches of eternity joined to the poverty of him who had not where to lay his head; you see the Preserver of all—for by him all things consist—brought to the necessity of asking a drink of water, that he might slake his thirst; you see the God of the universe, the King of Glory, insulted by men, tempted by devils, maltreated even by those he came to bless, rudely treated, seized upon, arrested and scourged; you see the blood pouring down his back, the flesh cut open; you see that head, which, as God was wearing the crown of the universe, insulted by the Roman soldiers placing a crown of thorns upon it, insulting and torturing him at the same time; you find the strong, brawny arms of these Roman soldiers pressing the crown of thorns into his brow, and the blood streaming down: you see him dragged from court to court and unjustly condemned: you see him compelled to bear his own cross: though he was the everlasting God, yet he was a perfect man, and you see him sinking with exhaustion under the cross; you see him dragged up the hill of Calvary and nailed to that cross; his holy hands nailed, and his blessed feet nailed to that wood, and he is lifted up, gasping and suffering between earth and heaven: you see him again and again insulted in every way.

But is this all? No, it is not. You hear a groan—"My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" What is the meaning of this? It is now that his Father is punishing him. What! has he not suffered enough? Has he not endured enough? Has he not been maltreated enough, in body, mind, and soul? Yes, too much, but not enough that God may be just, and the justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus—not enough that salvation may be accomplished legally, completely, and fully—not enough, that he may be able to save to the uttermost, as well as from the uttermost; from the uttermost of sin, guilt, and pollution, to the uttermost of pardon, redemption, and holiness, even to the heights of heaven itself. Not enough, that he may be able to do this legally and justly, and it could be done in no other way. Therefore, the Father smote him. This, then, is the great and solemn feature of the suffering that made him cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" It was not merely bodily, mental, or spiritual pain; he was treated as a sinner, punished as a sinner. Our sins were laid upon him; he was made a sin-offering in the stead of us. It was the Father that drew the sword of justice; it was the Father that executed the punishment; it was the Moral Governor of the Universe that forsook his beloved Son. Such was the love of God, such was the love of Christ, such was the salvation necessary for our deliverance. Oh, man, how can you treat this matter with neglect? How can you treat this subject with indifference? Behold this gigantic enterprise! Behold this wonderful history! Behold the Deity concerned in all the arrangements! Behold the everlasting Son dying for you! The Father smote him, the Father punished him, and all this for you. Oh! how much it cost our God to save the sinner!

This is the seed; the proclaiming of this—that now God can be the justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus, that now the ministers of religion may proclaim that there is pardon, full, complete, everlasting pardon for all who come to the Father by Christ. Every poor sinner may here find a Saviour—whatever the amount and nature of your guilt, whatever crimes you may have committed, no matter how vile your parentage may have been—no matter how loathsome the associations with which you have been connected—no matter how infected with the basest turpitude—how deeply dyed with the blackest crimes, you may here find pardon and forgiveness. Every poor sinner is welcome alike, from the enlightened Briton to the ferocious Sepoy. Any poor sinner, and every poor sinner, may now come for the road is open, and

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hell may be escaped, and heaven may be scaled to its most glorious heights through the blood of Christ.

The seed is also *precious*, if you consider *its inestimable value*, if you consider that it can procure many blessings, and they are such blessings as nothing else can procure. If all the world were to agree to die for one man, that one man could not be saved by the sacrifice! If all the angels in heaven, as well as all the men on earth, agreed to suffer for one man, they could not save him! There must be such an offering as the Son of God alone could present. He was under no obligation of duty, therefore all his obedience was voluntary, and he could transfer it. He was under no obligation to suffer, and his sufferings therefore, as well as his obedience, could be transferred. The seed then is precious, because of the blessings—the many blessings, it procures. Look at the condition of the fallen soul of man—the soul that could not cease to exist. It was created to live for ever; it fell, it was condemned; it could not be driven out of existence, because it was created to live for ever. Annihilation could not reach it. And, therefore, if it were to be driven from God, it must be driven from him for ever. Its punishment must be punishment for ever, because it can never cease to exist. Some people think it a very extraordinary thing that the punishment of the sinner must be the punishment of eternal torments, but they forget the law of the soul's creation, the characteristic nature of the soul. If the soul therefore is not saved, it must be damned for ever! It was created with the high intent and purpose of living for ever. God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul, a soul that should never be without an existence; consequently the fall was an everlasting fall, and its effects everlasting woe. What a fearful thing! And what a wonderful seed must that be which can give life to that soul, can bring to it pardon and purity, and restore it to communion with its God! It conveys the blessings of regeneration, pardon, justification, and sanctification, gives grace according to our time and day, it promises the Holy Spirit's guidance and support, and the care of the Almighty Father's arm; it provides an interest in that salvation, which, when once it begins, is carried on to completion and perfection. Look at the innumerable series of blessings—each one a wonderful blessing in itself.

Now this is the precious seed that can save the soul so circumstanced as we have seen, and save it completely, save it entirely—for mind, no salvation could be of use to the soul, but that; if the salvation was partial, no soul could be saved.

Who can estimate the value of the sufferings and death of the Son of God? It will take eternity to estimate that value, and blessed be God, redeemed souls will for ever declare the inestimable value of that great salvation; and near the throne will cry out, for ever and for ever without ceasing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, who hath redeemed us from our sins with his own blood, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

There is the seed. Oh, will you not receive it now? Only believe, and all the blessings of Christ, which he has provided, are yours. Oh, will you not receive the seed into your hearts? May the Holy Ghost help you to receive it. May the Holy Ghost break up the fallow ground of your souls, that you may receive this blessed seed, and be finally happy and glorify God in him. But allow me also just to mention, that the *text* may also include the *labours of all persons who are engaged in promoting the salvation of their fellow-sinners*, whether they are teachers of scriptural schools, ragged schools, Sunday schools, district visitors, tract distributors, or whatever other class they may belong to in the glorious spiritual army. Ministers and missionaries are first, but these others are spiritual helpers, and, by the grace of God upon them, they may do much towards bringing the people to a knowledge of Christ; and I say, therefore, to each and all of the classes of helpers I have mentioned, go on in your holy work, and be not discouraged by the difficulties, that may lie in your path. You will be called upon again and again to weep: but never forget that you are bearing precious seed, that will bring forth fruit, to the praise and glory of God. Let the remarks I have uttered regarding ministers and missionaries be also felt by you Sunday school teachers, tract distributors, district visitors, for you ought to feel them in the same way, if not perhaps in

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the same degree. Remember, every teacher is responsible for the souls of his class, every missionary for the souls of the people of his district, every ragged school teacher for the souls committed to his charge, and every tract distributor is responsible for his efforts to bring men to consider their state and condition before God. And then there are included besides the *heads of families*—fathers and mothers, your children and servants should be your peculiar care. Oh, see that you go forth amongst them with the precious seed, and remember, that though you may be called upon to weep, you may have the privilege at length to rejoice. Many and many wayward sons have, in answer to the prayers of weeping parents, been at last softened and brought to repentance for sin and faith in Christ, as the glorious biographies of the saints show.

Once more we would observe, that *suffering Christians may also find consolation in this text*, and there are Christians that have peculiar sufferings for the gospel's sake. Go on suffering Christian with your testimony—"Bear the toil, maintain the strife," "strengthened with the bread of life." O yes, let me encourage you to take the same comforts which have been administered to the former classes, as far as they suit your case, and you can take them, and see that you go on growing in grace and in the knowledge and love of the Saviour Jesus Christ.

Besides, too, there are your own besetting sins. You have much trouble to give them up. But right hand sins must be cut off, and right eye sins must be plucked out. "Lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset you and run the race, looking unto Jesus." Let me entreat of you, suffering Christian, tried Christian, to hold Christ in your mind, and see that you keep your eye fixed upon him. The trouble you have to bear will not last long. It will be all over soon; and, remember, "no cross, no crown." "These light afflictions which are but for a moment, work out for you an exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

II. We observe that the sower shall not always weep, but he "*shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*"

1. This is manifested when the *ministers see the fruits of their labour*. Oh, what blessed things are reserved for the ministers of religion if they are but faithful. They may be assured that they will have comforts fully commensurate with all their sorrows. Paul felt a great deal when he said to the converts under his ministry, "Ye are our crown of rejoicing." Oh, it is a great thing for the tried, the afflicted minister of Christ to be thus comforted. I care not how a minister may be sifted and tried, these comforts are more than a counterpoise, to think that he has been instrumental in bringing men to believe on the Son of God. It is true, the godly minister does not see all the fruits of his labours—and it would not be well that he should on earth—but he sees enough to make him full of joy. How frequently have we been comforted when one and another hath taken us by the hand and said, 'O, Sir, on such and such a day, such a sermon was blessed to me.' During the summer months, this year, while passing through some provincial towns, on a preaching tour, I found one and another coming to me, and saying, "Blessed be God that I ever heard the gospel preached at your church." O, you know not the joy, the exultation of heart such testimonies produced. So much so, that your minister was obliged, on more than one occasion, to deal much in mental prayer, that God would keep him humble; and more than once found it necessary to escape from the public into the private room, to ask God to keep him humble. O, these are blessed, glorious comforts, when we see our epistles known and read of all men. And then, too, when the minister hears of the dying testimony, when in the sick room and on the dying bed, there is a whisper of the time, place, and circumstance when the word was blessed. O, my dear friends, these are comfortable things; when you see a man dying and leaving the world behind him, and hear him declaring, "I was an enemy to the cross of Christ, I was a worldling, and heard you preach, was brought to Jesus, and now I am going to heaven." And then look at the thousands we never hear anything at all about; and it is well, for we could not hear them, and should be exalted above measure. But when we get to yonder happy land all will be revealed.

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2. The text will be *more fully realized* on the *morning of the resurrection*, when the faithful minister, the missionary, the ragged school teacher, the Sunday school teacher, the tract distributor, the district visitor, the head of the family will all be there, and every saved one, who has laboured for the salvation of his fellow-men, will stand at the feet of Jesus, surrounded with the fruits of their pious labours, and will say, "Here are we and the children whom thou hast given us." "They shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them."

O, beloved hearers, this is a glorious harvest! We talk of the blessed harvest we have had, and we have had a blessed one this year, we cannot be too thankful for it. It is a most important thing to have a good harvest—abundant and good—right in quantity and quality; and both have been right this year. But the spiritual harvest, brethren, is infinitely superior. O, ye ministers of religion, whose anxiety is, what is the amount of salary I can obtain? what is to be the position I am to hold among my fellow-men? what dignity am I to be honoured by? and where am I to sit and take my high and dignified position? O, you anxious ministers of religion, who are troubling yourselves about "promotion," here is your promotion. If you want it be much in prayer. Come into your pulpits, well prepared with reading and study, and with the help of the Holy Ghost, throw your hearts and souls into your sermons, and people will come and hear—at least in England, in the present day, they will—for there is a blessed appetite for hearing the preached gospel just now—and the Holy Ghost will bless the word, and you will finally bring your hearers up as your sheaves, and present them at the foot of the throne.

It is a blessed sign of the times—lo! these great gatherings of people, to hear the preaching of the gospel; but we want to hear of men coming into the pulpits, striving with God, that he may bless their sermons to the salvation of souls: I want this to be the grand result of these great and important assemblies. May it be the result of our assembly to night! My business is rather with you than with those outside the church. May the Lord bless this sermon to you to night! How many of you am I to bring with me to heaven? How many of you here to night are now unsaved? If I were to ask you to hold up your hands, and you dare to do so, how many of them, I fear, would be held up! Oh, my God, why should this be so? Come now, and believe on the Son of God, and be saved for ever, come to him and cast yourselves upon him, get into the life-boat, and all will be right. You will be united to Christ; and because he lives, ye shall live also. No matter what trouble is before you—cheer up; he will uphold you through it all; and even in death itself. The most peculiar part of death is, that we must die alone; and no amount of love or money can find us company on that last journey. As the child once said to his mother, when the mother said, "My child, can you die happy," "O, yes, I can, mother, if you will go with me." Oh! she could not go with the child. Oh! none can go with us, through the valley of the shadow of death; and yet if we really go alone we must be damned; but with Christ with us, all will be well. And what Jesus has begun he will finish. Jesus is the first and the last. He, who begins the work in thy soul, will carry it on to the culminating point of everlasting glory.

3. Look at the *glorious harvest*, which *certainly and doubtless there will be for Christ*. What a remarkable passage is that—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." O, think of the millions that will stand forth on the morning of the resurrection and glorify Christ, as the author and finisher of their redemption. Every successful minister, wherever he has laboured, North, South, East, and West, and in whatever period of the church militant's history, he may have flourished, will ascribe all glory to Jesus, as by him and his cross all the achievements were made; and, on that glorious resurrection day, all the palms of victory, all the crowns of glory will be laid prostrate by the universal redeemed multitude at the feet of the Saviour's throne; and, amidst rejoicing angels, the hallelujah chorus of the saved, will resound in constantly repeated strains through heaven's entire extent—"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

THE HARVEST.

4. Then again the subject draws our attention to *the harvest of the world*. That is coming on, and O, what a harvest that will be! Look at it; painters have depicted it, in a very striking and awful manner, but they have not come up to the reality; poets have described it in the most fearful language, but they have not come to the full point of the awfully sublime theme; when the last day comes, men will be going on with their usual business, and there will be marrying and giving in marriage; rich men will be trying to become richer; monarch will be trying to overreach monarch; battles will be in the act of being fought; the whole world will be going on as usual, thinking of everything but Christ—everything but hell and heaven. Then something is seen in the heavens. There is a peal of extraordinary thunder, such as was never heard before; and a flash of lightning will be seen, such as was never seen before. Everything is in motion, and one is speaking to another, and saying, what meaneth this? The man who lived for his gold, says, and is it come to this? Men of private crime, are seen with their paramours, and saying with utter consternation, Is it come to this? Mere professors of religion too, are saying, Is it come to this? And all find it too late, and in madness will call to the rocks and to the mountains to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb, for the dream is ended, and an angel has put one foot upon the land, and one upon the sea, and is saying, "Time is no more;" earth is over, seed time has ended, prepare for your harvest. Vanity of vanities—your gold, your pomp, your splendour, your dignity, your honours, public and private, your dominations and oppressions are now no more. The heavens are full of flame, and all the possessions of earth are being burned up—the harvest is come; and what a harvest to those who know not God! Oh! worldling, will you for this lose your soul? Oh, man of ambition and of pleasure, will you for these things lose your soul?

Now, what application ought I to make of this subject? O, make it for yourselves. Young man, young woman, aged man, aged woman, may the Holy Ghost impress this sermon on your minds! We have cast about the seed; we have preached the gospel; we beg of you not to turn away from it, not to spurn it. We entreat of you, by the world's coming overthrow, by the certainty of eternal torments, by the value of the soul, by the misery of the lost soul, by the glories of heaven, by the salvation purchased by the Son of God, by the offer of full salvation, by all that the gospel contains—salvation without money and without price—Oh! "the Spirit and the Bride, say, Come, and whosoever will, let him come, and take life and salvation freely." By the blessings of a Christian's dying hour I entreat you—"Come and see," said one, "how a Christian can die." Do not you say, young man, the preacher is exciting, is alarming us. Remember what Louis XIV. said to Massillon, "When I hear other men, I am pleased, with them; but when I hear you, I am awfully displeased with myself." O, sinner, it is my solemn duty to startle you out of the dream, which you are in. You would not be displeased with the man, who, seeing your house on fire, should smash in every panel of your door, if he could not otherwise awaken you; and if, in worldly things you are so wise, let me entreat of you, not to be less so in those infinitely more important things, which concern your immortal soul. If heaven be true, if salvation in Christ be true, and if the harvest we must reap be everlasting joy or everlasting woe, no ministry can be too earnest, too solemn. Do you know what an eminent tragedian once said to a Bishop of London; when the Bishop asked him, how it was, that the actor could produce a greater effect upon his hearers than the preachers did? "The reason," said the tragedian, "is clear; we utter fiction, with all the earnestness of truth; but you preachers preach eternal truths with all the indifference of fiction." "What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" My mission is not to please men, but to be an instrument in bringing sinners to Christ, so that I may meet them, all happy and glorious, on the great day. "Behold," says my Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, "I stand at the door and knock; and if any man open to me, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

The Lord bless the word for Christ's sake! Amen.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

BELOVED FRIENDS AND KINDRED IN CHRIST,

The days seem like weeks and the weeks seem like months since I went up to the house of the Lord. My heart and my flesh are crying out for the assembly of the saints. Oh how I long to hear once more the solemn shout of the festal throng who with the voice of joy and praise keep holy day!

I am slowly rallying. My great struggle now is with weakness. I feel as if my frail bark had weathered a heavy storm which has made every timber creak. Do not attribute this illness to my having laboured too hard for my Master. For his dear sake, I would that I may yet be able to labour more. Such toils as might be hardly noticed in the camp for the service of one's country, would excite astonishment in the church for the service of our God.

And now, I entreat you for love's sake to continue in prayer for me. When ye find access to God, remember me. Mind it is not by the words of your mouth, nor yet by the cravings of your heart, but it is by the precious blood of Christ ye must draw nigh to God. And when ye find his sweet presence and are bedewed with his holy anointing, then pour out your souls before him, and make mention of me in your supplications.

Yours to love and serve in the Gospel,

Clapham, Tuesday Evening, 26th October, 1858.

C. H. SPURGEON.

GOD'S BARRIERS AGAINST MAN'S SIN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 16TH, 1856, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Fear ye not me? saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone."—Jeremiah v. 22, 23.

THE majesty of God, as displayed in creation and providence, ought to stir up our hearts in adoring wonder and melt them down in willing obedience to his commands. The Almighty power of Jehovah, so clearly manifest in the works of his hands, should constrain us, his creatures, to fear his name and prostrate ourselves in humble reverence before his throne. When we know that the sea, however tempestuous, is entirely submissive to the behests of God; that when he saith, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further," it dares not encroach—"the pride of its waves is stayed." When we know that God bridles the tempest, though "nature rocks beneath his tread," and curbs the boisterous storm—he ought to be feared—verily, he is a God before whom it is no dishonour for us to bow ourselves in the very dust. The contemplation of the marvellous works which he doth upon "the great and wide sea," where he tosseth the waves to and fro, and yet keepeth them in their ordained courses, should draw forth our devoutest emotions, and I could almost say, inspire us with homage. Great art thou, O Lord God; greatly art thou to be praised; let the world which thou hast made, and all that therein is, declare thy glory! I can scarcely conceive a heart so callous that it feels no awe, or a human mind so dull and destitute of understanding, as fairly to view the tokens of God's omnipotent power, and then turn aside without some sense of the fitness of obedience. One might think the impression would be spontaneous in every breast, and if not, only let reason do her office, and by slower process every mind should yet be convinced. Let your eyes behold the stars; God alone can tell their numbers, yet he calls them all by names; by him they are marshalled in their spheres, and travel through the aerial universe just as he gives them charge; they are all his *servants*, who with cheerful haste perform the bidding of their Lord. You see how the stormy wind and tempest like *slaves* obey his will; and you know that the great pulse of ocean throbs and vibrates with its ebb and flow entirely under his control. Have these great things of God, these wondrous works of his, no lesson to teach us? Do they not while declaring his glory reveal our duty? Our poets, both the sacred and the uninspired, have feigned consciousness to those inanimate agents that they

might the more truthfully represent their honourable service. But if because we are rational and intelligent beings, we withhold our allegiance from our rightful Sovereign, then our privileges are a curse, and our glory is a shame. Alas, then the instincts of men very often guide them to act by impulse more wisely than they commonly do by a settled conviction. Where is the man that will not bend the knee in time of tempest? Where is the man that does not acknowledge God when he hears the terrible voice of his deep-toned thunder, and sees with alarm the shafts of his lightning fly abroad, cleaving the thick darkness of the atmosphere? In times of plague, famine, and pestilence, men are prone to take refuge in religion—they will make confession, like Pharaoh, when he said, "I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked;" but like him, when "the rain, and the hail, and the thunders have ceased," when the plagues are removed, then they sin yet more, and their hearts are hardened. Hence their sin becomes exceeding sinful, since they sin against truths which even nature itself teaches us are most just. We might learn, even without the written oracles of Scripture, that we ought to obey God, if our foolish hearts were not so darkened; thus unbelief of the Almighty Creator is a crime of the first magnitude. If it were a petty Sovereign against whom ye rebelled, it might be pardonable; if he were a man like yourselves, ye might expect that your faults would easily find forgiveness; but since he is the God who reigns alone where clouds and darkness are round about him, the God to whom all nature is obedient, and whose high behests are obeyed both in heaven and in hell, it becomes a crime, the terrible character of which words cannot pour-tray, that you should ever sin against a God so marvellously great. The greatness of God enhances the greatness of our sin. I believe this is one lesson which the prophet intended to teach us by the text. He asks us in the name of God, or rather, God asks us through him—"Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?"

But while it is a lesson, I do not think it is *the* lesson of the text. There is something else which we are to learn from it. God here contrasts the obedience of the strong, the mighty, the untamed sea, with the rebellious character of his own people. "The sea," saith he, "obeys me; it never breaks its boundary; it never leapeth from its channel; it obeys me in all its movements. But man, poor puny man, the little creature whom I could crush as the moth, will not be obedient to me. The sea obeys me from shore to shore, without reluctance, and its ebbing floods, as they retire from its bed, each of them says to me, in the voices of the pebbles, 'O Lord, we are obedient to thee, for thou art our master.' But my people," says God, "are a revolting and a rebellious people; they go astray from me." And is it not, my brethren, a marvellous thing, that the whole earth is obedient to God, save man? Even the mighty Leviathan, who maketh the deep to be hoary, sinneth not against God, but his course is ordered according to his Almighty Master's decree. Stars, those wondrous masses of light, are easily directed by the very wish of God; clouds, though they seem erratic in their movement, have God for their pilot; "he maketh the clouds his chariot;" and the winds, though they seem restive beyond control, yet do they blow, or cease to blow just as God willeth. In heaven, on earth, even in the lower regions, I had almost said, we could scarcely find such a disobedience as that which is practised by man; at least, in heaven, there is a cheerful obedience; and in hell there is constrained submission to God, while on earth man makes the base exception, he is continually revolting and rebelling against his Maker.

Still there is another thought in the text, and this I shall endeavour to dilate upon. Let us read it again. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?"—now here is the pith of the matter—"which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone." "The sea," says God, "is not only obedient, but it is rendered obedient by the restraint merely of sand." It is not the rock of adamant that restrains the sea one half so easily as just that little belt of sand and shingle which preserves the dry land from the inundations of the ocean. "The sea obeys me, and has for its only check the sand; and yet," says he, "my people, though they have restraints the strongest that reason could imagine, are a revolting and a rebellious people, and scarcely can my commands, my promises, my love, my judgment, my providence or my word restrain them from sin."

That is the point we shall dwell upon this morning. *The sea is easily restrained by a belt of sand; but we, notwithstanding all the restraints of God, are a people bent on revolting from him.*

The doctrine of the text, seems to me to be this—that without supernatural means God can make all creatures obedient save man; but man is so disobedient in his heart, that only some supernatural agency can make him obedient to God, while the simple agency of sand can restrain the sea, without any stupendous effort of divine power more than he ordinarily puts out in nature: he can not thus make man obedient to his will.

Now, my brethren, let us look back into history, and see if it has not been so. What has been a greater problem, if we may so speak concerning the Divine mind, than that of restraining men from sin? How many restraints God has put upon man! Adam is in the garden, pure and holy; he has restraints that one would think strong enough to prevent his committing a sin so contemptible and apparently unprofitable as that by which he fell. He is to have the whole garden in perpetuity, if he will not eat of that tree of life; his God will walk with him, and make him his friend; moreover, in the cool of the day, he shall hold converse with angels, and with the Lord, the Master of angels; and yet he dares eat of that holy fruit which God had set forth not to be touched by man. Then he must die. One would think it was enough, to promise reward for obedience, and punishment for sin; but no, the check fails. Man, left to his own free will, touches the fruit, and he falls. Man cannot be restrained, even in his purity, so easily as the mighty sea. Since that time, mark what God has done by way of restraint. The world has become corrupt; it is altogether covered with iniquity. Forth comes a prophet. Enoch prophesies of the coming of the Lord, declaring that he sees him coming with ten thousand of his saints to judge the world. That world goes on, as profane and unheeding as before. Another prophet is raised up, and cries, "Yet a little while, and this earth shall be drowned in a flood of water." Do men cease from sin? No; profligacy, crime, iniquities of the vilest class, are as prevalent as before. Man rushes on to his destruction; the deluge comes and destroys all but a favoured few. The new family goes out to people the earth: will not the world now be clean and holy? Wait a little, and ye shall see. One of these men will do a deed which shall render him a curse for ever, and his son Canaan shall in after years inherit his father's curse. Not long after that you see Sodom and Gomorrah devoured with fire which God rains out of heaven. But what of this? What though in later years Pharaoh and his chariots are drowned in the Red sea? What though Sennacherib and his hosts perish at midnight by the blast of an archangel? What though the world reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, being drunken with the wine of God's wrath? What though the earth be scarred and burned by war? What though it be deluged with floods? What though it be oppressed with famines, pestilences, and diseases? She still goes on in the same manner; at this hour the world is a sinful, rebellious world, and until God shall work a work in our day, such as we shall scarce believe, though a man tell it to us, the world shall never be pure and holy. The sea is restrained by sand; we admire the beautiful poetic fact; but man, being naturally more ungovernable than the storm and more impetuous than the ocean, is not to be tamed; he will not bend his neck to the Lord, nor will he be obedient to the God of the whole earth.

"But what of this fact?"—you say—"we know it is true; we do not doubt it." Stay awhile; I am now coming to deal with your hearts and consciences; and may the Holy Spirit help me in doing so! I shall divide, as God would divide them,—*saints and sinners.*

First of all, ye *saints*, I have a word to say to you. I want you to look at this as a doctrine not more evident in the history of mankind at large, than abundantly verified in your own case. Come, now, I want to ask of you this morning, whether it cannot be said of you truly—"The sea is bound by sand; but I am one of those people who are bent on revolting from God, neither can any of his restraints keep me from sin." Let us review, for a few moments, the various restraints which God has put upon his people to keep them from sins which, nevertheless, are altogether ineffectual, without the accompanying power of irresistible grace.

First, then, remember there is a restraint of gratitude which, to the lowly regenerated heart, must necessarily form a very strong motive to obedience. I can conceive of nothing that ought so much to prompt me to obedience as the thought

that I owe so much to God. O heir of heaven! thou canst look back to eternity and see thy name in life's fair book set down; thou canst sing of electing love; thou dost believe that a covenant was made with Christ in thy behalf, and that thy salvation was made secure in that moment when the hands of the Eternal Son grasped the stylus and signed his name as the representative of all the elect. Thou believest that on Calvary thy sins were all atoned for; thou hast in thy soul the conviction that thy sins, past, present, and to come, were all numbered on the scape-goat's head of old, and carried away for ever; thou believest that neither death nor hell can ever divide thee from thy Saviour's breast; thou knowest that there is laid up for thee a crown of life which fadeth not away, and thine expectant soul anticipates that with branches of palms in thine hands, with crowns of gold on thine head, and streets of gold beneath thy feet, thou shalt be happy for ever. Thou believest thyself to be one of the favoured of heaven, a special object of divine solicitation; thou thinkest that all things work together for thy good, yea, thou art persuaded that everything in providence has a special regard to thee, and to thy favoured brethren. I ask thee, O saint, is not this a bond strong enough to keep thee from sin? If it were not for the desperate unstableness of thy heart, wouldst thou not be restrained from sin by this? Is not thy sin exceeding sinful, because it is sin against electing love, against redeeming peace, against all-surpassing mercy, against matchless affection, against shoreless grace, against spotless love? Ah! sin has reached its climax, when it dares to sin against such love as this. O Christian! thine affection to thy Lord and Master should restrain thee from iniquity. And is it not a fearful proof of the terrible character of thine heart, of thine heart even now, for still thou hast evil remaining in it, that all the ties of gratitude are still incapable of keeping thee from unholiness. The sins of yesterday rise to thy memory now. Oh! look back on them. Do they not tell thee that thou dost sin most ungratefully? O saint! didst thou not yesterday use thy Master's name in vain, and not thy Master's only, but thy Father's name? Hadst thou not yesterday an unbelieving heart? Wast thou not petulant when girded with favours that ought to make a living man unwilling to complain? Wast thou not, when God hath forgiven thee ten thousand talents, angry with thy neighbour, who owed thee a hundred pence? Ah Christian! thou art not yet free from sin, nor wilt thou be, until thou hast washed thy garments in death's black stream, and then thou shalt be holy, as holy as the glorified and pure and spotless, even as the angels around the throne, but not till then. I ask thee, O saint, viewing thy sins as sins against love and mercy, against covenant promises, covenant oaths, covenant engagements, ay, and covenant fulfillments, is not thy sin a desperate thing, and art not thou thyself a rebellious and revolting being, seeing that thou canst not be restrained by such a barrier of adamant as thy soul acknowledges?

Next notice, that the saint has not only this barrier against sin, but many others. He has the whole of God's Word given him by way of warning; its pages he is accustomed to read; he reads there, that if he break the statutes and keep not the commandments of the Lord, his Father will visit his transgressions with a rod, and his iniquity with stripes. He has before him in God's Word abundant examples. He finds a David going with broken bones to his grave after his sin; he finds a Samson shorn of his locks, and with his eyes put out; he sees proof upon proof that sin will find a man out; that the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. Abundant warnings there are for the child of God, not of saints who have perished, for we have none such on record in Scripture, and none ever shall finally perish—but we have many warnings of great and grievous damages sustained by God's own children when they have sailed out of their proper course. And yet, O Christian, against all warning and against all precept thou dar'st to sin. Oh! art thou not a rebellious creature, and mayest thou not this morning humble thyself at the thought of the greatness of thine iniquity?

Again: the saint sins against his own experience. When he looks back upon his past life he finds that sin has always been a loss to him; he has never found any profit, but has always lost by it. He remembers such and such a transgression; it appeared sweet to him at the time, but oh! it made his Master withdraw his presence and hide his face. The saint can look back on the time when sin hung like a mill-stone round his neck, and he felt the terrible flame of remorse burning in his soul, and knew how evil a thing and bitter it is to sin against God. And yet the saint sins. Now, if the unconverted man sins, he does not sin against his own experience, for he has not had that true heartfelt experience that renders sin

exceeding sinful. But every time thou sinnest, O grey-headed saint, thou sinnest with a vengeance, for thou hast had all through thy life so much proof of what sin has been to thee. Thou hast not been deceived about it, for thou hast felt its bitterness in thy bowels: and when thou sippest the accursed draught thou art infatuated indeed, because thou sinnest against experience. Ay, and the youngest of the saints, have you not been made to taste the bitterness of sin? I know you have, if you are saints! and will you go and dip your fingers in the nauseous cup? Will you put the poisoned goblet to your lips again? Yes, you will; but because you do so in the teeth of your experience, it ought to make you weep, that you should be such desperate rebels against such a loving God, who has put not merely a barrier of sand, but a barrier of tried steel to keep in your lusts, and yet they will break forth; verily ye are a rebellious and revolting people.

Then again, God guards all his children with providence, in order to keep them from sin. I could tell you, even from the little experience I have had of spiritual things, many cases in which I feel I have been kept from sin by Divine providence. There have been seasons when the strong hand of sin has appeared for a while to get the mastery over us, and we have been dragged along by some strong inherent lust, which we were prone to practice before our regeneracy. We were intoxicated with the lust, we remember how pleasurable it was to us in the days of our iniquity, how we revelled in it, till we were on a sudden dragged to the very edge of the precipice, and we looked down; our brain reeled, we could not stand; and do we not remember how just then some striking providence came in our way, and saved us, or else we should have been excommunicated from the church for violating the rules of propriety. Ah! strange things happen to some of us; strange things have happened to some of you. It was only a providence which on some sad and solemn occasion, to which you never look back without regret, saved you from sin which would have been a scab on your character. Bless God for that! But remember, notwithstanding the girdlings of his providence, how many times you have offended; and let the frequency of your sin remind you that you must indeed be a rebellious creature. Though he has afflicted you, you have sinned; though he has given you chastisement, you have sinned; though he has put you in the furnace, yet the dross has not departed from you. Oh! how corrupt your hearts are, and how prone you are still to wander, notwithstanding all the barriers God has given you to encompass you!

Yet, once more let me remind you, beloved, that the ordinances of God's house are all intended to be checks to sin. He girds us by the worship of the sanctuary; he girds us by the remembrance of our holy baptism; and all else that is connected with Christianity is intended to check us from sin. And great are the effects which these produce; yet all are insufficient, without the preserving grace of God, given to us day by day. Let us think, beloved, too, that God has given to us a tender conscience, more tender than the conscience of worldly men, because he has given us living consciences, whereas theirs are often seared and dead. And yet, against this living conscience, against the warnings of the Spirit, against precept, against promise, against experience, against the honour of God, and against the gratitude they owe him, the saints of God have dared to sin, and they must confess before him that they are rebellious, and have revolted from him. Bow down your heads with shame while ye consider your ways, and then lift up your hearts, Christians, in adoring love, that he has kept you when your feet were making haste to hell, where you would have gone, but for his preserving grace. Shall not this long suffering of your God, this tender compassion, be your theme every day—

“While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures?”

Will you not pray, that God should not cast you away, nor take his Holy Spirit from you, though you are a rebellious creature, and though you have revolted against him?

This is for the saints; and now may the Spirit help me, while I strive to apply it to sinners! Sinner, I have solemn things to say to thee this morning; lend me for a few minutes thy very closest attention; I will speak to thee as though this were the last message I should ever deliver in thine ear. I have asked my God, that I may so speak to thee, O sinner, that if I win not thy heart I may at least be free from thy blood; and that if I am not able to convince thee of thy sin, I may at

any rate make thee without excuse in that day "when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Come, then, sinner; in the first place, I bid thee consider thy guilt. Thou hast heard what I have said. The mighty ocean is kept in obedience by God, and restrained within its channel by simple sand; and thou, a pitiful worm, the creature of a day, the ephemera of an hour, thou art a rebel against God. The sea obeys him; thou dost not. Consider, I beseech thee, how many restraints God has put on thee: he has not checked thy lusts with sand but with beetling cliffs; and yet thou hast burst through every bound in the violence of thy transgressions. Perhaps he has checked thy soul by the remembrance of thy guilt. Thou hast this morning felt thyself a despiser of God; or if not a despiser, thou art a mere hearer, and hast no part nor lot in this matter. Dost thou not remember thy sins in the face of thy mother's counsels and thy father's strong admonitions? Do they never check thee? Dost thou never think thou seest a mother's tears coming after thee? Hast thou never heard a father's prayer for thee? When thou hast been spending thy nights in dissipation, and hast gone home late to thy bed, hast thou never thought thou hast seen thy father's spirit at thy bed side, offering one more prayer for an Absalom, his son, or for an Ishmael, his rebellious child? Consider what thou hast learned, child! Baptized with a mother's tears, almost immersed in them; thou wast early taught to know something of God; when thou didst go from thy mother's knees, thou wentest to those of a pious teacher; thou wast trained in a Sabbath school, or at any rate thou wast taught to read the Bible. Thou knowest the threatenings of God; it is no new tale to thee, when I warn thee that sinners must be condemned; it is no new story when I tell thee that saints shall wear the starry crown; thou knowest all that. Consider, then, how great is thy guilt; thou hast sinned against light and knowledge; thou art not the Hottentot sinner, who sins in darkness, but thou art a sinner before high heaven, in the full light of day; thou hast not sinned ignorantly, thou hast done it when thou knewest better; and when thou comest to be lost, thou shalt have an additional doom, because thou didst know thy duty, but thou didst it not. I charge that home upon thee, I charge it solemnly upon thy conscience; is it true, or is it not? Some of you have had other things. Don't you remember, some little time ago, when sickness was rife, you were stretched on your bed? One night you will never forget; sickness had got strong hold of you, and the strong man bowed himself. Do you not remember what a sight you had then of the regions of the damned; not with your eyes, but with your conscience? You thought you heard their shrieks; you thought you would be amongst them yourself soon. Methinks I see you; you turned your face to the wall, and you cried, "O God, if thou wilt save my life, I will give myself to thee!" Perhaps it was an accident; thou didst fear that death was very near; the terrors of death laid hold of thee, and thou didst cry, "Oh! God, let me but reach home in safety, and my bended knees and my tears pouring in torrents, shall prove that I am sincere in the vow I make." But didst thou perform that vow? Nay, thou hast sinned against God; thy broken vows have gone before thee to judgment. Dost thou think it a little thing to make a promise to thy fellow creature and break it? It may be so in thine estimation, but not so in that of honest men. But dost thou think it a little thing to promise to thy Maker, and to break thy promise? There is no light penalty for sinning against the Almighty God; it will cost thee thy soul, man, and thy soul's blood for ever, if thou goest on in this fashion. Vow and pay, or if thou payest not, vow not; for God shall visit those vows upon thee, in the day when he maketh inquisition for blood, and destroyeth thy soul. Thou hast been guarded thus; remember that thou hast had extraordinary deliverances, the disease did not kill thee; thy broken bones were healed; thou didst not die; when the jaws of death were uplifted, they did not close upon thee: here thou art still. Thy life is spared.

Oh! my dear hearers, some of you are the worst; you have regularly sat in these pews—God is my witness, how earnestly I have longed for you all in the bowels of Christ. I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God to you. If I had been a time-server, and kept back part of the truth, much more honour would I have received from men than I have received; but I have cleared my conscience, I trust, from your blood. How many times have I seen men and women cry, the hot tears falling down their cheeks in quick succession? and expected that I should have seen a change in some of your lives. But how many of you there are, who have gone on sinning against warnings, which, I am sure, though they may have

been excelled in eloquence, have never been exceeded in heartiness! Do you think it a little thing to sin against God's ambassador? It is no little sin: every time we sin against the warnings we have received, we sin so much the more heinously. But there are some—I had hope for you, but ye have gone back to the ways of perdition; I have cried, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" But I have been obliged to go to my Master with that exclamation, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Woe unto thee, Bethsaida; it were better for thee that thou hadst been Tyre and Sidon than that thou shouldst have been left in the midst of privileges, if thou shouldst perish at last! Woe unto you, hearers of New Park Street! Woe unto you that listen not to the voice of the minister here! If ye perish beneath our warnings, ye shall perish in a horrible manner! Woe unto thee, Capernaum! thou art exalted unto heaven, but thou shalt be cast down to hell." Woe unto thee, young woman! thou hast had a pious mother, and thou hast had many warnings. Woe unto thee, young man! thou hast been a profligate youth; thou hast been brought to this house of prayer from thine infancy, and thou art sitting there even now; often does thy conscience prick thee; often thy heart hast told thee that thou art wrong; and yet thou art still unchanged! Woe unto thee! Woe unto thee! And yet will I cry unto my God, that he would avert that woe and pardon thee; that he would not let thee die, but bring thee unto himself, lest now ye perish in your sins. Ye sinners! God has a controversy with you; he tames the sea, but ye will not be tamed; nothing but his marvellous grace exerted in you will ever check you in your lusts. You have sinned against warnings and reproofs, against providences, mercies, and judgments, and still ye sin.

Oh! my hearers, when you sin, you do not sin so cheaply as others; for when you sin, you sin in the very teeth of hell. There is not a man or woman in this place, I am sure, who, when he or she sins, does not know that hell is the inevitable consequence! Sirs, ye do not sin in the dark. When God shall give you the wages of your iniquity, you shall not be able to say, "O God, I did not know this would be the pay for my labour." When thou didst sow tares, thou couldst not expect that thou shouldst reap wheat; thou knewest "that they who sow carnal things, shall reap carnal things;" thou art sowing to the flesh, but not with the hope that thou wilt reap salvation; for thou knowest that "he who soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." Sinner, it is a dreadful thing to sin, when God puts hell before thee! What! sin when he has given out his threatening? Sin! while Sinai is thundering, while hell is blazing? Ay, that is to sin indeed. But how many of you, my dear hearers, have sinned like this. I would to God, that he would turn this house into a Bochim, that you might weep over your guilt. It is the hardest thing in the world to make men believe their guilt. If we could once get them to do that, we should find that Christ would reveal to them his salvation. I cannot with my poor voice and my weak utterance, even bring you to think that it is Christ Jesus in the ministry of his Spirit who can give you a true and real sense of your sin. Hath he done so? Hath he blessed my words to any of you? Do any of you feel your sins? Do any of you know that you are rebellious? Do you say, from this time forth you will mend your ways? Sirs, let me tell you, you cannot do that. Are you better than the mightiest of men? The best of men are but men at the best, and they are convinced that they cannot tame their own turbulent passions. God saith that the sea can be tamed with sand; but the heart of man cannot be restrained, it is still revolting. Dost thou think thou canst do that, which God saith is impossible? Dost thou suppose thyself stronger than God Almighty? What! canst thou change thine own heart, when God declares that we must be born again from above, or else we cannot see the kingdom of heaven? Others have tried to do it, but they cannot. I beseech thee, do not try to do it with thine own strength. I am glad thou knowest thy guilt; but O do not increase that guilt, by seeking to wash it out in the foul stream of thine own resolutions. Go and tell God that thou knowest thy sin, and confess it before him, and ask him to create in thee a clean heart, and renew in thee a right spirit. Tell him thou knowest that thou art rebellious, and thou art sure that thou always wilt be, unless he change thy heart; and I beseech thee, rest not satisfied until thou hast a new heart. My hearer, be not content with Baptism; be not content with the Lord's Supper; be not content with shutting up your shop on Sunday; be not content with leaving off drunkenness; be not content with giving up swearing. Remember, you may do all that, and be damned. It is a new heart and a right

spirit you want; begin with that, and when you have that, all the rest will come right. Bethink thee, my hearer; thou mayest varnish and gild thyself, but thou canst never change thyself. Thou mayest moralise, but thou canst never spiritualise thy heart. But just bethink thee. Thou art this morning lost; and just think of this,—thou canst do nothing whatever to save thyself. Let that thought rise in thy soul, and lay thee very low; and when thou goest to God, cry, "O Lord, do what I cannot do; save me, O my God, for thy mercy's sake."

My dear hearers, have I spoken harshly to you, or will ye rather take it in love? Ye who have sinned thus terribly against God, do ye feel it? Well, I have no grace to offer to thee, I have no Christ to offer to thee, but I have Christ to preach to thee. Oh! what shall I say? This:—you are a sinner. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." Art thou a sinner? Then he came to save thee. Oh! joyful sound. I am ready to leap in the pulpit for very joy, to have this to preach to thee. I can clap my hands with ecstasy of heart, that I am allowed again to tell thee—"It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Let me tell you that when he came into this world he was nailed to the cross, and that there he expired in desperate griefs and agony; and there he shrieked, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There the blood ran from his hands and feet, and because he suffered he is able to forgive. Sinner, dost thou believe that? Thou art black; dost thou believe, in the face of thy blackness, that Christ's blood can make thee white? What sayest thou, sinner? God has convinced thee of thy sin; art thou willing to be saved in God's way this morning? If thou art willing, thou shalt be saved. It is written,—"*Whosoever will, let him come.*" Art thou thirsty this morning? come hither and drink. Art thou hungry? come and eat. Art thou dying? come and live. My Master bids me tell you, all you who feel your sins, that you are forgiven; all you who know your transgressions, he bids me tell you this:—"I, even I, am he that blotteth out your transgressions, for my name's sake." Hast thou been an adulterer, hast thou been a whore-monger, a thief, a drunkard, a Sabbath-breaker, a swearer? I find no exception in this proclamation;—"Whosoever will, let him come." I find no exception in this;—"Him that cometh I will in nowise cast out." Dost thou know thy guilt? then I do not ask thee what thy guilt is. Though thou wert the vilest creature, again, I tell thee, if thou knowest thy guilt, Christ will forgive thee. Believe it, and thou art saved.

And now will ye go away and forget all this? Some of you have wept this morning. No wonder; the wonder is that we do not all weep, until we find ourselves saved! You will go away to-morrow to your farms and to your merchandize, to your shops, and to your offices; and the impression that may have been produced on you this Sabbath morning will pass away like the morning cloud. My hearers, I would not weep, though you should call me all the names you can think of, but I will weep because you will not weep for yourselves. Sinners, why will ye be damned? Is it a pleasant thing to revolt in the flames of hell? Sirs, what profit is there in your death! What! is it an honorable thing to rebel against God? Is it an honor to stand and be the scorn of God's universe? Dost thou say thou shalt not die; yet thou wilt put it off a little while? Sinner, thou wilt never have a more convenient season; if to-day is inconvenient, to-morrow will be more so. Put it off to-day, wipe away the tears from your eyes, and the day may come when you would give a million worlds for a tear, but you shall not be able to get one. Many a man has had a soft heart; it has passed away, and in after-years he has said, "Oh, that I could but shed a tear!" O God! make thy word like a hammer this morning, that it may break the rocky heart in pieces! Ye who know your sins, as God's ambassador, I beseech you, "be ye reconciled unto God." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Remember, once lost, ye are lost for ever; but if ye are once saved, ye are certainly saved for ever. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," said Paul of old; Jesus himself hath said "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." I will not finish with a curse. "He that believeth shall be saved." God give you all an interest in that eternal blessing, for the Lord Jesus' sake!

"THE TRIUMPHANT REAPPEARING OF JESUS CHRIST."

A Sermon

PREACHED ON TUESDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 7TH, 1858, BY

THE REV. J. J. WEST, M.A.,

(*Rector of Winchelsea, Sussex*),

AT ALL SAINTS CHURCH, SPICER STREET, SPITALFIELDS.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.—*HEB. ix. 27, 28.*

THERE is a solemn point contained in the first verse of the text, that passage of God's word, which you have just heard me, my hearers, read. I am not going to dwell, important as it is, upon that portion of the passage, except to take a passing glance of it, and to give, it may be, a hint to you, and to myself, upon the stern fact, that it is appointed unto us (to you and to me), once to die, "but after this the judgment."

I was saying to my brother, when I entered his parsonage-house this evening, "How quickly these Tuesday evenings, once a month, come round." "Yes," said he, "and I believe there are several anxiously expecting these Tuesdays to come." Well, my hearers, how quickly will the sand in our glass of life be all run out—with many of us, there may be but a few—there may be but one more dust to run, and to-morrow, you, or I, may be gone. And after death comes the tremendous event of judgment! Now, thus prefacing the subject, and which has been applied to my own mind with power, I shall pass on to the second verse in the text. And as I preach to you on the great subjects which this second verse contains, remember that death and judgment are at hand. Who can tell but that the mere announcement of the fact may have a blessed effect upon you. You Londoners, amidst the hurry and bustle of business, need a word of exhortation, and you may get a hint, perhaps, from a quiet countryman from this pulpit to-night.

Whilst we need admonition on these things in the quiet country hamlet, where, as we go through our parish, we scarcely meet a soul; you, in London, need in a ten-fold greater degree, amidst your passing thousands, and in the hurry of business, and of trade, such a hint as this. May God burn it into your hearts; and if you were not thinking of death and

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judgment as you entered the church door just now, may you go out of it contemplating this stern and solemn fact, and as you contemplate death and eternity, may your minds be carried on to Him "mighty to save." And with David, may you be able to say (as he does, I think in Psalm civ), "My meditation of Him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord." I leave the first verse; I take that merely as a preface—a kind of title page to what is coming; for the other verse contains within its short compass a "Bible in a Bible!" "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them who look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Now, my hearers, in the context the apostle is giving a description of the rites and ceremonies under the law, showing, prefacing (if I may so speak) that tremendous event, the shedding of that precious blood, which only could save sinners. It was not possible the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins; the blood shed in type, under the law, set forth that wonderful transaction which in after ages was to be accomplished on the cross—when the GOD MAN was to suffer and to die, and by one offering, and that for ever, was to satisfy the justice, and to manifest the mercy and the love of God to the people of His own everlasting choice. These are the great subjects in the context. You can read that at your bed-sides to night, and may it be blest to your souls.

I now come to the great, the vast point—"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Mark the fact; listen to those unmistakable words, "The sins of many!" the sins of all for whom He died. And here I pause, purposely pause, that you may entirely understand what I preach to you. On the authority of this Scripture, I proclaim Christ was "once offered to bear the sins of many." This cuts up the fashionable doctrine of universal redemption, a doctrine which is not scriptural; the false doctrine, that "God will save all men, if men will, and that men have only to come to God and He will save them." There is something catching in the sound. I know as well as any man, that if a man comes to God, God will save him. But a sinner never will come, never can come to God, unless God compels him to come: "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John vi. 44.)

And again,—“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.” We can understand that. Now, my hearers, listen. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” I delight in that word “many;” it is antagonistic to the Arminian, Wesleyan, Quakerish, and Popish word “all.” The Arminian does not like such a text as that.—“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.”

Listen to it! In every time-state of the church, I believe, that spiritually the church is a “little flock;” but when the church is assembled hereafter in her moment of triumph; when the church, now militant, becomes then the church triumphant; standing round her conquering Lord—I believe what the Bible tells me, that her people then, her sons and her daughters, then, will be as countless as the sand upon the sea shore. I believe, too, that then there will be only one gigantic and all-seeing eye that will be able to count up the number of the people, whom His own precious blood has saved from the damning curse of sin, and a broken law. I believe that

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God's eye alone will be able to view the countless multitudes that no man can number. I may here refer to a verse in Kent's hymns, a verse that I shall never forget, no, not through all eternity; a verse that was blessed to me in a period of soul-exercise—Kent says in one of his hymns, speaking of the covenant arrangement of Jehovah—

“Grace had secured in Jesus then,
Millions untold of chosen men.”

And the way in which those lines were blest to me was this: That as “millions” were saved, and secured in Jesus, I might have a hope in my own soul that I was one amongst the millions secured in Christ. “Many,” not all! If there is an Arminian here, let me say to him, in love, but let me tell him in unflinching boldness, that the doctrine which he holds, and which he cannot help holding, till he is brought out by the teaching of sovereign grace, that the doctrine of universal redemption, which he holds, is treason against my King and Master.

“Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many”—not all! Now comes the point, are you, am I among that “many?” There is only “one Lord, one faith, one baptism (that settles the controversy about what a church is—there is only one); one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. And unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” The church is peculiar. I would impress it on the persons assembled here, that the church is a distinguished people, a purchased people, a people gathered from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south; composed (as our church expresses it) “of all sorts and conditions of men,” high and low, rich and poor, redeemed by the blood of the everlasting covenant; and it is only those who have been died for, by the one Lord who receive from Him the one faith. There is no schism in the body; there is one faith, one baptism; that is the Baptism (mark me) of the Holy Ghost. “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” One God, who is above all, through all, and in you all. The church is one! We are children of the same family, entitled to the same privileges, heirs of the same everlasting home, we eat the same bread, and drink at the same fountain, the waters of everlasting mercy, life and love. Oh! what a family this to be a member of! Men, I know, pride themselves on aristocratic birth, and talk about their ancient pedigree; but the church of God, what a family is that, the oldest, the only aristocratic family after all; “born of God;” loved by Christ; chosen in Him; picked out from the havoc of the fall, and given to Christ, to be with Him, and to dwell with Him, for ever. And of all these, mark the pedigree, as written in John i. 13, 14, “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” That gives the death-blow to proud Arminianism. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.” “Who is above all, and through all and in you all.” And mark this! CHRIST is in every new-born man, in every elect man. I may go further than the new birth—I may go to election—Christ was in the church, and the church was in Christ, in the everlasting purpose of God; she was in Christ, and Christ was in her, in purpose, covenant and decree; and for her He was content to die! Listen to me—

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" 'Tis His own, He dearly bought her,
 What she cost he only knew;
 Through the pains of hell he sought her,
 Paid in blood her ransom too."

What words are these for a poor uneducated man, formerly a labourer in the dockyard at Plymouth. See how God can teach an uneducated man! how he can teach a man like Kent to proclaim truth. "What she cost He only knew." What she did cost, no one can ever know, but the living GOD-MAN who died for her. "He that spared not His own Son"—(as my brother in the desk was reading these words, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" they struck me very forcibly. Is He for you? then defy the devil, then defy self, defy all enemies. "If God be for us, who can be against us?") "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," that is, for all the church, not for all mankind. Paul is addressing the church in Rome; you will see this from the opening verses in this epistle; "the called of Jesus Christ." "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints;" not all the inhabitants at Rome, not all the people there. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.) "All things!" everything—from His "own elect" He withholds nothing.

I know the trials of the pathway; if I did not, I should never be able to preach, I should be useless in the pulpit; nobody can preach to feed the church, but a tried man. God tries us to make us preach; we must have trials, in order to ascertain whether or not we are one of the "many" of whom my text speaks; and the "many" consist of "the few." In every time-state of the church God has said, and God will do it, my hearers, He has said it, that with His own Son, he will freely give us all things. "He that spared not His own Son!"—one can hardly control the sound of the tongue in proclaiming such a word as that—"He that spared not His own Son!" There is love! O! to see by faith that Son die; to see that Son suffer the death of the cross, the agony,—when He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken ME?" And then, to see Him, the holy, sinless Christ, led away like a felon to execution, and to death; Himself, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." Do I succeed in preaching these words into your hearts? Now mark! "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

But to keep to the words of my text. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Now the next point is, *what* He bore. Listen to me! that which Christ bore was, "the sins of many." Then do you think that a just God will call you to account for your sins, when they have been all atoned for and all cancelled by the death of His Son? My debt (supposing I am a Christian man) is paid. You men of business will understand me: if you get into difficulties; if a writ is served against you, you must put in an appearance; but if you get a bondsman, you may defy the sheriff's officer; you may say to him, "What business have you to detain me? touch me if you dare; do it at your peril: you have no authority now, all you want is the money; my bondsman is responsible; he will pay my debt for me."

Now, then, let me carry out my text—"So Christ was once offered to

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bear the sins of many." The debt is all paid: our Lord preached this Himself, in the seventh chapter of Luke. "There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." What can you do with a poor man who has nothing to pay? you may take the bed from under him; you may shut him up in prison; but what good is that? It may be all very well in a commercial country like this; we must, perhaps, have recourse to these things. But look at the gospel—"And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." "Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?" (said Christ to the pharisee.) "Simon answered, and said, I suppose he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she has washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." (Luke vii. 43-48.)

Now, my hearers, I have got more text than I can preach out fully. Pulpiters are often tried and harrassed with having too much text, and I have too much here. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."

We read in Zechariah's prophecy, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." There is a restriction, "to the house of David, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem," that is the saving part of it. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." I looked at my Greek Testament to-day, and I find that the meaning of the word "once," in the Greek, as it stands in our text, may be rendered "once for all." Let me read it in this sense, "So Christ was offered, once for all (that is 'out and out'—'for ever') to bear the sins of many!" We can do nothing—creature merit, or works, are all unavailing—GRACE, and grace only, saves the elect. Remember the case of Uzzah and the ark. The ark was shaking in the cart which the oxen drew: and Uzzah put forth his hand, as he thought to preserve the ark, and God struck him dead upon the spot. So, if you attempt to bring anything in your hand, it is an evidence against you, that you are dead in trespasses and sins. Augustus Toplady says:—

"Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling."

"Once for all! Christ was offered to bear the sins of many." I must leave that part of my subject—a most important part of my text is now to come. "And unto them that look for Him, shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Christ then is coming again. You believe the fact, my hearers, that He has been once; you are an infidel if you do not believe *that*. But whether you believe it or not, I proclaim from the pulpit that He has been; and that he has died as the all-sufficient atonement on the cross of Calvary, entirely pacifying the anger of God against sin and

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elect sinners. Mark! "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it;" he loved her from all eternity. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." That love was evidenced by that death on the cross. "And unto them that look for Him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." He is coming again. Hear what the apostle says to the church at Thessalonica: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Or, as it is in the Greek, "Exhort one another with these words."

I am not going to enter upon the second advent of our blessed Lord, except to proclaim the fact from the pulpit, that he is to appear again: that he is coming from heaven, preceded by his herald archangel: and the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, and the elect shall be gathered from all quarters of the earth, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. And the man in this pulpit, the man in the desk, and the people in those pews shall then be there—and who shall stand when he appeareth? That is the solemn point. You in London, have much outward distraction; and so have we, comparatively quiet people in the country; Satan is very busy everywhere.

Death is a solemn announcement to us all. I cannot imagine a more startling declaration of truth and fact, amid the distraction, and hurry, and bustle of a London life, than to be told you must die. Neither can I imagine anything more seasonable amid the solemn stillness of this house of prayer, than to be told from the pulpit, that you must die—that you and I must each stand at the judgment-seat of God; and that Christ is coming again to gather together His own people, then comes the mighty fact—

"How stands the case my soul with Thee?
For heaven are thy credentials clear?
Is Jesus' blood thy only plea?
Is he thy great forerunner there;

"Is thy proud heart subdued by grace,
To seek salvation in His name;
There's wisdom, power, and righteousness,
All cent'ring in the worthy Lamb."

But mark the point—"Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time." Now I have sufficiently dwelt upon that part of the text: I have insisted on the doctrine that he is coming again—the second time. Now, then, look at those words, "Without sin." What are we to understand by that? He never had any sin! He was the holy God! It was proclaimed to the highly-favoured virgin, from whose womb the Saviour was to come—"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that HOLY THING, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the SON OF GOD." (Luke i. 35.) The sinless Christ, the only man without sin. The sin-bearer of His elect family—himself "without sin, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate (as Paul says) from sinners;

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without sin, though in union with chosen sinners, in a way in which he, and they never can be separated.

What is the meaning of that—His coming again “without sin?” My hearers, it is impossible to understand it in English; we get at it more intelligibly in the Greek. I believe I am not straining the passage, in rendering it thus. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without blood unto salvation.” That is, without having to shed any more blood, as an atonement for sin.

Now I purposely pause here, because I feel this to be a tremendous subject for sinners to reflect upon.

Do not suppose I pique myself on a mere knowledge of Greek: the teaching of the spirit of God is what we want: and the Holy Ghost can teach any unlettered man, who has never been to school, and who cannot read a word even of English, much less of Greek, to understand the Truth, contained in God’s word. I want you to understand this in the way in which I put it before you, because it may simplify the subject to you in some degree: that “to them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without having to shed blood” again, by way of atonement. Thus salvation’s work is “finished”—the salvation of the church is accomplished! In a passage in Daniel, it is written, “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin; and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision, and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

That has been done when He came first. Calvary’s cross has registered the fact—the name of every blood-bought sinner is registered in the BOOK OF LIFE—and a battalion of devils, and innumerable sins, can never blot one name out of that book which has been everlastingly written there. And is not this good news? Is it not a blessed proclamation to hear from the pulpit, and on the authority of God’s HOLY WORD that salvation’s work is finished, accomplished, done! and all this by the precious blood of the Redeemer.

“That blood which can remove my guilt,
That blood which the great Saviour spilt;
That blood which cleanses me within,
That blood which pardons all my sin.”

Is that blood to you a token? Remember the Passover, and its history in Exodus—the blood seen upon the lintel was the sign to the destroying angel. Again in Ezekiel ix. 4, “And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.” But for what did they sigh and cry? A man may sigh and cry for many things—he may be discontented and peevish, and fretful carnally—ill-tempered because of worldly difficulties—cross from family causes, and domestic annoyances—but this is not the sigh, nor the cry which obtains the mark. Listen, “Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.”

“Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee; according to the greatness of Thy power preserve those that are appointed to die.” It is the

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poor prisoner under the conviction of sin, and law, and conscience, that only sighs and cries so as to obtain the mark; carnal sighs and carnal groanings will not avail with God. It is that sigh which proceeds from a broken heart, under an inward sense of abominations, under a felt knowledge of your own corruption, depravity and sin. Bear with my plain speaking.

I am understood, I trust, my hearers, on this point, of Christ's appearing the second time, without having to make any more atonement, to shed any more blood—for sin!

To do justice to such a subject, is quite impossible; we cannot preach it; we cannot fully declare such a glorious subject; it beats, it masters the power of any human tongue. Christ's blood has "once"—"once for all"—atoned for all the sins of the church. This is Protestantism—all else is Popery. Christ has absolved the church from the guilt of all sin—in Him is our salvation. The only absolution which the poor sinner wants, is that which my brother has declared unto you this evening, from the desk, in the church of England's declaratory form of words—"the absolution and remission of our sins" by God Himself. Neither he nor I wish, neither do we dare to assume the office of absolvers; the only absolution, and the only pardon of sin, and for sinners, is that which has been effected on the cross by the eternal HOLY GOD MAN! O that cross!

"Jesus, the God, extends his arms,
Upon a cross of love and dies."

"O! wondrous cross, O! bleeding Lamb,
I'll sing thy love, and tell thy fame;
And taught to feel my sin and woe,
Will to thy wounds for shelter go."

That is the one only shelter. The sinner made sensible, often needs a shelter; and when the rain falls heavy, and the wind beats high, we need a shelter. It was so; I was told here, in Brick Lane, the other Sunday, No shelter to be had; you could not run into the houses. So, Christ is the only shelter. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." The Christian is continually pursued by enemies, like the hunted animal which is followed by the pack of hounds. There is but one refuge, but one shelter for safety, and that refuge is the Lord Jesus Christ; and when the sinner is made sensible of his sins, and is enabled to look to Christ, he runneth unto Him, and is safe from all evil. In Him is salvation! in Him is a strong tower of defence against the world, flesh, and the devil, and against all the wickedness, and wretchedness of self.

And here I come to the experimental point in the text; and the time reminds me that I should stop; but listen to me—"And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Here is a word for every poor, hungry, trembling sinner in this house of prayer. I should be grievously disappointed were I deceived in the hope I feel that there are several here who are "looking unto Jesus"—looking for—looking at Him! Here is the point! Such as are looking for Christ—exercised about Him—seeking for evidences of their own personal interest in His precious blood—such as are tried, and ask, Am I one whom His precious blood has redeemed? Am I a vessel of mercy afore prepared unto glory? Such long to know their "election of God." "Take us the foxes,

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the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes." (Song ii. 15.)

It is one thing to be a professor, it is another to be a possessor. And men may talk of ministers, and that they can only hear such and such preachers; but the reality of hearing is when Christ is heard through His ministering servants. Ministers can only preach with power, as God bestows that power; I can only preach as I am taught of the Lord—it is His work, and it is His special teaching; it is one thing to preach what is called a sermon—another to preach CHRIST'S GOSPEL. How strongly Cowper speaks of false teachers—

"From such apostles, O! ye mitred heads,
Defend the church! and lay not careless hands
On skulls that cannot teach, and will not learn."

It is a tremendous office to be a messenger to the church—to be the bearer of God's word to poor hungering, thirsty sinners. But the point I am preaching on is this, "To them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Now, that looking is the sign, the evidence of a new heart; not a change of heart as the so-called "evangelicals" assert. There is no such thing as a "change of heart," it is the "new heart." "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." The scriptural word is "a new heart," and that new heart will be looking for and after Jesus!

"I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Immanuel, all forbid,
That I should seek my pleasures there.

"It was the sight of Thy dear cross,
First wean'd my soul from earthly things;
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings.

"I want that GRACE that springs from Thee,
That quickens all things where it flows;
And makes a wretched thorn like me
Bloom as the myrtle or the rose."

Can you say that? Do you know that want? then you have an evidence, "a token for good!" You want something—so did the repenting prodigal, when he had spent all—as Englishmen say, when he "had sown his wild oats,"—rebellious, riotous, wasteful! then, when "he had spent all he began to be in want." He wanted something, and that something was only to be found in his father's house. And O! the mercy! his father saw him, had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

"The prodigal's returned, the apostate vile and base."

None could be worse! But O! the love! Listen. "But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead,

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and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." (Luke xv. 22—24.) Mark! "the best robe!"

"The best, the very best!"

Now, are we in want? and looking to Jesus, convinced of our personal guilt; and knowing that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;" are we looking to Him as our ALL? What is faith? we hear much about it; but what do we know of a living faith for ourselves? In this epistle to the Hebrews, we have a definition of faith, "But we see Jesus"—that is faith! Have we seen Jesus? A valued Christian friend of mine, once said to me, "I have done with all other sight-seeing, since I have seen the Lord." "Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 14—16.)

But this looking for Jesus; "And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." The Christian must look for and to Jesus—necessity compels the Christian. Toplady insists that every new-born man is a "necessitarian." The apostle Paul was a necessitarian—"Necessity is laid upon me; yea! woe is me if I preach not the gospel." He was forced to preach it! God made him preach the Gospel! We are necessitarians in the pulpit; you are necessitarians in the pews—I speak of Christians. I wish not to be a popular preacher; but I do desire to be made a useful one. The members for your city must be *popular*—ministers of the gospel must be *faithful*. A gospel minister will only be popular with the poor—not poor as to circumstances—I use not the word poor in that sense—but "poor in spirit." A duke may be a poor man. If the earl of Derby—the Premier of England were here, I should preach to the noble Earl that the test of his Christianity must be the same as I insist on to you and to myself—poverty of spirit—being a really poor man. It is the poor "that flock as the doves to their widows." And in Zeph. iii. 12, "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." Such is the church! and there is none other! Talk not of this church or the other—of the church of the baptist, or of the church of the independent. The church of the living God is composed of the poor—"an afflicted and poor people"—of poor *churchmen* and poor nonconformists. Christ, the head of the church, was a poor man—"a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." And are we looking for Him? that is the point. There is a remarkable scripture in the 42nd Psalm. I was told by a hearer of mine some time ago in the city who heard a minister preach on that scripture, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God"—the account of it did me good, and I carried the idea to my own little flock at home. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks." It is only the poor hart that is hunted, that pants; it is not the deer that lies at ease, under the shade of the spreading oak, in the lordly park; it is the poor hart that is picked out by the huntsman, and turned out to be hunted, that pants. "As the hart panteth

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after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." And I pant when the devil tempts and pursues me, when sin besets me. Do you know what temptation is? Have you never panted? If I may use the expression—Do you know what it is to sweat under the power and pressure of sin? "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will *with the temptation also* make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.) The poor hart may be caught and may be devoured by the stag-hounds; but the soul which that figure typifies is immortal—because saved! Tempted we may be! tried we shall be! but damned we never can be! One word and I will stop. There is another point in the text, the words, "He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him, even so, Amen." He is coming again, "without sin unto salvation." I understand by this, that He is coming again to realize to His people the reality of salvation. O! what a subject! what a thought! Salvation! everlasting blessedness in heaven! Faith is too feeble to paint the picture; we can only sketch its mere outline—eternity alone can fill it up. Then this earth will have been burnt up.

O! what a text have I set before you to-night, my London hearers; what words for a sinful man to find his own tongue proclaiming to his fellow-sinners, amid the stillness of this house of God. And then the fact that we shall—that we must realize *personally* that which the first verse in the text declares—"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;"—but O! mark what follows—"so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." And now the solemn point is, are we each looking away from self and creature merit in every way, to Him "mighty to save!"

Such a subject, if applied with power, unctiomed in the heart, and hope kindled within us, makes the soul leap (as it were) for joy. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."

Christ then is coming again—a second time—not to shed blood again, but to "appear without sin unto salvation"—to appear for the everlasting blessedness of His people—of those who know what it is to be waiting, looking for Him. The weakest believer, the poor trembler, can surely come in here—"Them that look for Him," and have hope, and feel hope kindled in the soul.

And now to refer to another subject. And what shall I say? I delight to preach the GOSPEL to you; but I am too proud to beg—to beg I am ashamed. It was suggested to me that the collection this evening should be postponed till October, because, as was stated, some who generally attend these Tuesday evening services, and who are the most able to give, are now out of town, at the sea-side, or elsewhere. But my view was, let us be independent of rich men, or any one else; it is the usual time to have a collection—Many may be absent, but where is the LORD—

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform."

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And to-night (it may be), He will show, that, though now surrounded with poor, who cannot afford to go to the seaside, we shall have a better plateful than we have ever had before.—I say no more—whether you give a farthing or a ten pound note. If I am spared to come here three months hence, I shall then simply say on the collection evening—"There are plates at the door." Remember that there are unavoidable expenses; and, I should hope there are several here who feel that they cannot spend their money so well, as in the cause of the gospel. May God incline your hearts to do His will. If you value the gospel—if my ministry is useful to you, the want of a few pounds must not stop these monthly services—that is sufficient.

God grant that the great and mysterious truth in the tremendous scripture I have been preaching on, may be, above all, blest to you and to me—"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin unto salvation."

May God bless His Gospel to you and burn it into your hearts, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen! Amen!

Recently published, a Volume of Sermons, by the Rev. J. J. W^{EST}, M.A., selected from the "Penny Pulpit," price 5s.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

A PASTORAL LETTER.

I AM a prisoner still. Weakness has succeeded pain, and languor of mind is the distressing result of this prostration of my physical powers. It is the Lord's doing. In some sense I might say with Paul, "I am a prisoner of Jesus Christ." But ah! my bonds are more easy and less honourable to wear than his. Instead of a dungeon, my lot is cast in an abode of comfort; the chain that restrains me from my accustomed ministry was not forged by man, but woven in the shuttle of God's providence: no rough jailor, but loving relatives and friends attend upon me in these tedious hours of my bondage. I beseech you therefore, my beloved, let your many prayers to God on my behalf be each and all mingled with thanksgiving. Gratitude should ever be used in devotion, like salt of old was in sacrifice, "without prescribing how much."

And now, though unable to stand in the pulpit, I will endeavour to give you a short address,—or rather, I will attempt to express the kindlings of my heart in a few broken sentences.

And first, to you my well-beloved and trusty brethren and sisters in Christ, and in the family tie of church fellowship; to you I tender my fondest regards, my sincerest thanks, my sweetest love. I feel refreshed by your sympathy, and my heart is overwhelmed at the estimation in which you hold me. It brings the hot blush to my cheek, and well it may. Tenderly as a husband thinks of the doating affection of his wife, as a father receives the fond homage of his children, as a brother when he is held in honour by all the family circle—so tenderly, and even more tenderly, I remember your care of me. The tone of your supplications during my affliction has been to me beyond measure grateful. I rejoice that ye have with humble submission kissed the rod; not impatiently asking my recovery, but meekly acquiescing in the providence of our heavenly Father, craving most of all that the Lord would sanctify the pains of your pastor, and guard with his own watchful eye the flock. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord."

Yet again, in the still chamber of retirement, I anxiously remember some who would have been ere this baptised on a profession of their faith, and received into membership of the church, had not my health been thus impaired. Be not fretful concerning this delay: accept it as an ordained trial of your patience. If a farmer has a field of corn severed by the sickle from its native earth, but not yet housed in the garner, is he not concerned lest he suffer loss? How much more, as a minister of Christ, am I concerned for you—the converts God hath given me. Oh, beloved! be steadfast. Commit not the great sin. Beware lest Satan take advantage of you—for we are not ignorant of his devices. Draw not back. It is written in the law, "No devoted thing that a man shall devote unto the Lord of all that he hath, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord." The Israelite might not retract the beast that he dedicated from his fold for an offering—far less the Christian, when he hath resolved to yield up his heart, his life, his soul to Jesus. I speak not thus to grieve you. Think not that my jealousy

bodes a suspicion, but rather that it betokens my love. "We are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." "My little children, these things I write unto you that ye sin not."

To those who have worshipped during the past two years in the Surrey Music Hall,—the preacher's greetings and his love. Ye have heard how the Prophet Samuel set up a stone and called the name of it *EGG-EGG*, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." That stone marked the place where the Lord gave the children of Israel a great victory over the Philistines: but it likewise marked the "very place where, twenty years before, the Israelites were defeated, and the Ark of God was taken." Let us rejoice, O my people, with trembling. Two years ago that Hall was the scene of such discomfiture, such dire calamity and death, as we hardly dare to think of. Sure that was the night of my heart's bitterest anguish. "Howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing." For ninety-nine successive Lord's days was I enabled to supply the pulpit; no congregation could have been more evenly sustained; never were sermons more widely echoed. God has owned these services to the quickening of many souls, to the establishing of many in our most holy faith, and by them through his goodness hath the Blessed Spirit stirred up many of my brethren in the ministry to a righteous emulation. "According to this time it shall be said, What hath God wrought!" Ah, sirs! if ye knew in what fear we begun, and with what anxiety we have continued—if ye knew the unrequited exertions of those beloved brethren, whose names are unknown to fame, but whose good offices were essential to keep the place open—if ye knew, once more, how many a time your minister has prostrated himself as a broken-hearted sinner before God to renew his first vows of unreserved self-dedication—if ye knew these things, ye would not be backward in that ascription of praise never more meet to flow forth in liquid strains with weeping eyes—"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." My beloved brethren, "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Yet I have other friends. They are scattered far and wide throughout this country, and the sister isles. To you let me drop a word. Ye have received me kindly. Faster friendships were never surely made in fewer hours than I have cemented with some of you. Ye are of my kith and kin. I will take you to record that my God hath graciously proportioned my strength to my days, while I have been among you "in labours more abundant." When I have laboured most for his glory, I have feasted most on the provisions of his grace. And blessed be God, when oftentimes called to visit a people heretofore unknown to me, he hath given me the key of David, to unlock the secret springs of your heart; nay rather, he holdeth the key in his own hand; he openeth and no man can shut. Keep, beloved, the word of his patience, and he will keep you from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Finally, my brethren, I am cheered and comforted beyond measure by the joyous hope that on the coming Sabbath I shall again appear among you. This prospect is as oil to my bones, and although I cannot hope to fulfil my ministry with my wonted vigour, yet to attempt to address you will be as a rich medicine—as a tonic to my fluttering heart. Brethren, pray for us.

Yours in covenant,

C. H. SPURGEON.

November 2nd, 1858.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

COMFORT PROCLAIMED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, SEPTEMBER 21, 1856, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."—Isaiah xl. 1.

WHAT a sweet title: "My people!" What a cheering revelation: "Your God!" How much of meaning is couched in those two words, "My people!" Here is speciality. The whole world is God's; the heaven, even the heavens are the Lord's and he reigneth among the children of men. But he saith of a certain number, "My people." Of those whom he hath chosen, whom he hath purchased to himself, he saith what he saith not of others. While nations and kindreds are passed by as being simply nations, he says of *them* "My people." In this word there is the idea of proprietorship to teach us that we are the property of God. In some special manner the "Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." All the nations upon earth are his; he taketh up the isles as a very little thing; the whole world is in his power; yet are his people, his chosen, favoured people, more especially his possession; for he has done more for them than others; he has bought them with his blood; he has brought them nigh to himself; he has set his great heart upon them; he has loved them with an everlasting love, a love which many waters cannot quench, and which the revolutions of time shall never suffice in the least degree to diminish. "My people!" O my hearers, can you by faith put yourselves in that number who believe that God says of them, "My people?" Can you look up to heaven to-night, and say, "My Lord, and my God: mine by that sweet relationship which entitles me to call thee Father; mine by that hallowed fellowship which I delight to hold with thee when thou art pleased to manifest thyself unto me as thou dost not unto the world?" Canst thou, beloved, put thine hand into thine heart and find there the indentures of thy salvation? Canst thou read thy title writ in precious blood? Canst thou by humble faith lay hold of Jesus's garments, and say, "My Christ?" If thou canst, then God saith of thee, "My people;" for if God be your God, and Christ your Christ, the Lord has a special, peculiar favour to you; you are the object of his choice, and you shall be accepted, at last, in his beloved Son. How careful God is of his people; those of whom he says, "My people;" mark, how anxious he is concerning them, not only for their life, but for their comfort. He does not say, "strengthen ye, strengthen ye my people;" he does not say to the angel, "protect my people;" he does not say to the heavens, "drop down manna to feed my people;"—all that and more also his tender regard secures to them; but on this occasion, to show us that he is not only regardful of our interests, but also of our superfluities, he says, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." He would not only have us his living people, his preserved people, but he would have us be his happy people too. He likes his people to be fed, but what is more, he likes to give them "wines on the lees well refined," to make glad their hearts. He will not only give them bread, but he will give them honey too; he will not simply give them milk, but he will give them wine and milk, and all the sweet things which their hearts can desire. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people;" it is the Father's yearning heart, careful even for the little things of his people. "Comfort ye, comfort ye,"—that one with a tearful eye; "Comfort ye, comfort ye,"—yon child of mine with an aching heart; "Comfort ye,"—that poor bemoaning one; "Comfort ye, comfort ye—my people, saith your God."

Now to night we shall notice the parties to whom the command is addressed; secondly, the reason for it; and thirdly, the means for carrying it out.

I. First, then, to whom is this command addressed? You know, beloved, the Holy Spirit is the great Comforter, and he it is who alone can solace the saints if their hearts be really cheered; but he uses instruments to relieve his children in their

distress and to lift up their hearts from desperation. To whom, then, is this command addressed? I believe it is addressed to *angels* and to *men*.

To *angels*, first of all, I believe this command is addressed: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." You often talk about the insinuations of the devil; I frequently hear you bemoaning yourselves because you have been attacked by Apollyon, and have had a hard struggle with Beelzebub; you have found it hard to resist his desperate thrusts which he made against you; and you are always talking about him. Allow me to remind you that there is another side of that question, for if evil spirits assault us, doubtless good spirits guard us; and if Satan can cast us down, doubtless it is true God giveth his angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways, and they shall bear us up in their hands lest at any time we dash our feet against a stone. It is my firm belief that angels are often employed by God to throw into the hearts of his people comforting thoughts. There are many sweet thoughts which we have by the way, when we sit down, and when we rise up, which we scarcely dare attribute immediately to the Holy Ghost, but which are still beautiful and calm, lovely, and fair, and consoling; and we attribute them to the ministry of angels. Angels came and ministered unto Jesus, and I doubt not that they minister unto us. Few of us have enough belief in the existence of spirits, I like that saying of Milton's, "Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth, both when we sleep and when we wake." And if our minds were opened, if our ears were attentive, we might hold fellowship with spirits that flit through the air every moment. Around the death-bed of saints angels hover; by the side of every struggling warrior for Christ the angels stand. In the day of battle we hear in the air the neighing of their steeds. Hark! how softly do they ride to help the elect of God, while in the stern conflict for the right and for the truth, when they would have been cast down, some angel whispers, "Courage brother, courage, I would I could stand by thy side, shoulder to shoulder, and foot to foot, to fight the battle, but I must not; it is left for men. Courage then brother, because angels watch over thee!" It is a good wish of ours, when we say at eventide, "Peace be to thee beloved! good angels guard thee! may they spread their wings o'er thee and stand around thy bed!" But it is more than a wish, it is a reality. Do ye not know it is written "the angel of the Lord encampeth round them that fear him?" "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who are heirs of salvation?" This command then, comes to angels: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." Full oft the bright winged seraph flaps his wing to earth, to comfort some desponding heart. Full oft the cherub, ceasing for a moment his mighty song to go on errands of love, descends, as Gabriel did of old, to cheer the heart of many a struggling man and to stand by the side of those who are in conflict for God and for his truth. Ye angels, ye bright spirits, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

But on earth, this is more especially addressed to the Lord's *ministers*. He calls his ministers angels of the churches, albeit, they should be a great deal more like angels than they are. Ministers are bound to comfort God's people. I am sure, however, they cannot do it, unless they preach the good old doctrines of truth. Except they preach grace and gracious doctrine, I cannot see how they are to console the minds of the Lord's family. Were I to adopt a lax theology which teaches that God's children may fall away, that although redeemed they may yet be lost, that they may be effectually called, and yet slide back to perdition—I want to know how I could carry out this command? I should say, "Brethren, God has told me to comfort you; that is what I have to preach; you must get what comfort you can out of it, for I really cannot find much." I have often marvelled how the Arminian can comfort himself, wherewith he can light a fire to warm his own heart! What doctrine hath he? He believes he is a child of God to-day, and he is taught to believe he is a child of the devil to-morrow. He is now, he says, in the covenant, but then that covenant is such an uncertain thing that it may at any time be broken down, and he may die beneath its ruins; he knows himself to be redeemed by the blood of Christ, yet he is taught that that will not be sufficient without the concurrence of some good thoughts, good actions, or certainly by some good grace, some faith of his own. He is led to believe that his standing depends upon his own keeping near to God, instead of remembering that his keeping near to God must be by a sweet attraction that proceeds from God himself. Whence then comfort is to be procured I cannot tell. Happy I am I have no such gospel as that to preach. Let me preach the old gospel of Chrysostom, the old gospel of Augustine, the old gospel of Athanasius; and above all the old gospel of Jesus Christ, the originator of it; for there I can find something to comfort the child of God, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." It is our duty to reprove, to exhort, to invite,

but it is equally our duty to console. The minister should ask of God the Spirit, that he may be filled with his influence as a comforter; that when he ascends his pulpit on the Sabbath morning, his poor hard working people, who have been toiling, fretting with care and anxiety all the week, may say, "Here comes our minister; he is sure to have his mouth filled with good things; as soon as he opens his lips he will utter some great and glorious promise from God's Word. He has little to say himself, but he will be sure to tell us some good old truths with some fresh unction, and we shall go away refreshed." Oh! ye sons of toil, some of you understand this. With weary feet ye come to God's house; but oh! how gladly do ye sing there, and how sweetly does your singing harmonize with your hearts! and when you have heard the Word you go away and say, "Would God it were Sunday all the week! Oh! that I might sit and ever hear the words of God! Oh! that I might sit and ever drink in such comforts, so should I be satisfied as with marrow and fatness!" But sometimes you come up, and there is a flogging for you just when there needs to be consolation; or you get some dry hard metaphysical subject that has not any nourishment for your souls in it, and you go away half starved. You hear some fine discourse with rounded periods, and people say, "Oh! such an oration! never was English so beautifully spoken by Hall or Chalmers. How admirably it was delivered!" But alas! alas! what of the dish, the porcelain, the knife, the plate, the splendid damask cloth, the vase of flowers—where is the food? There is none there. You have got the garnishings and you ought to be thankful, and hold your ministers in esteem, even if they withhold from you your necessary bread! But the child of God wont like that; he says "I am weary of such things, away with these garnishings, give it me in plain rough Saxon if you will, but give me the gospel! Cut it up in any fashion you like, but do give me something to feed upon." The language may be rough, and the style homely, but the heir of heaven says, "There was 'comfort ye my people' in it; and that was what I wanted. Its style, humanly speaking, may not have exactly suited my taste, but it has fed my soul, and that will suffice me."

But, my friends, do not support your ministers as an excuse for the discharge of your own duties; many do so. They think when they have subscribed towards the support of the ministry, it is enough; imagining, as our Roman Catholic friends do, that the priest is to do everything, and the people nothing; but that is very wrong. When God said, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," he spake to all his people to comfort one another. And who is there here that knows the Lord and has tasted of his grace who cannot comfort his brethren? There is my strong friend who is on the mount feasting on dying love; he is the subject of rhapsodies and high excitement; his soul is like the chariot of Amminadib; it is on fire with his Master's presence; he is living near to God and drinking in fulness of joy. Oh! my brother, go and tell out a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what sorrow there is upon the earth. When thou art happy, remember there is sure to be some one else sad. When thy cup runneth over, find out an empty cup to catch the drops that overflow. When thy soul is full of joy, go, if thou canst, and find a mourner and let him hear thy song, or sit down by his side and tell him how glad thou art, and mayhap his poor heart may be warmed by thy sweet cheering words. But art thou weak? Art thou sad thyself? Then go to him who is the great Comforter and ask him to relieve thy distresses, and after that go out thyself and comfort others. There are none so good to comfort others as those who once were comfortless. If I were an orphan now, and needed a helper, I would seek one who had been an orphan in his youth, that he might sympathize with me. Were I houseless and poor, I would not go to the man who has rolled in wealth from earliest youth, but I would seek out the man who, like myself, has trodden with barefoot the cold pavement of the street at midnight; I would seek out the man who, penniless and poor, has begged his way from town to town, and then, by God's providence, has worked himself up; for I could believe that such an one would have a heart to sympathize with me. Go, thou poor tried one, go thou weather-beaten soul if thou canst, and call to thy mate, who is just out at sea with thee, and tell him to be of good cheer. Thou who art in the valley of the shadow of death, sing, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil;" and mayhap some brother far behind thee will hear the song, and will take heart.

"Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing, leave behind us,
Foot-prints on the sands of time.

Foot-prints that, perhaps, another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, may take heart again."

Go, and when thou hast found any good, strive to perpetuate it by communicating

it to others. When thy foot is on the rock, show others how to put their feet there. When thou art glad, tell others how thou wast made glad, and the same cordial which cheered thee may cheer them likewise. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

Now why do we not enjoy this a little more? I believe one reason is because we are most of us rather too proud to tread in our Master's footsteps. We like not to say with him, "I am not come to be ministered unto, but to minister." "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people" is a sublime admonition, but never surely intended for the meagre sympathy of fashion,—for a lady who can ride in her carriage, and send her card up, when she calls to inquire for a friend, who is sick; but were I to press home the duty, and tell her that "my people" includes the poorest of God's flock, the weakest and the meanest, she would think me a rude and vulgar young man, unacquainted with the etiquette of genteel society. Comfort the poor!—why should she? "The lower classes expect a great deal too much of the upper, I shall not mean myself by stooping to them." This kind of feeling many professing Christians have; they talk with a fine lisp, they deem it enough to say, "Poor creature, I pity your case, I am sorry for you!" But the heir of heaven reads, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." There is a poor man in the streets who has just come begging a crust at your door, and you can see by what he says, that there is something of God's grace in his heart; then comfort him. There is another up the creaking staircase in that back alley; you never went up there, you might be afraid to go; but if you hear of a child of God there, do not shrink back. God's diamonds may be often found amidst heaps of rags and tatters, in the very outskirts of the city, the abodes of haggard poverty; so go after them. Whenever you hear of a child of God, go and find him out; for this command, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," never ought to be put aside by our pride. Why, you go to your churches and chapels, sometimes, and sit in your pews, without even a thought of speaking to your neighbours. Some men will go to a chapel seven years, and scarcely know the name of the next seat-holder. Is that right? Many will sit at the Lord's table too, and not speak to each other. But that is not the fashion of communion as I understand it; it is not the fashion of the gospel either. When I was but a youth, the smallest boy almost that ever joined a church, I remember I thought that everybody believed what he said, and when I heard the minister say brother, I thought I must be his brother, for I was admitted into the church. I once sat next to a gentleman in a pew, and we received the bread and wine together; he called me "Brother," and as I thought he meant it, I afterwards acted upon it. I had no friend in the town of Cambridge, where I was; and one day when walking out, I saw this same gentleman, and I said to myself, "Well now, he called me brother; I know he is a great deal better off than I am, but I don't care for that; I will go and speak to him." So I went and said "How do you do, brother?" "I have not the pleasure of knowing you," was his reply. I said "I sat next to you at the Lord's table last Sabbath day, sir, and you called me 'brother' when you passed the cup to me, and I was sure you meant it." "There now," said he, "it is worth while seeing some one who believes a little with sincerity in these times; come in with me." And we have been the nearest and dearest bosom friends ever since, just because he saw I took him at his word, that he meant what he said. But now-a-days profession has become a pretence and a sham; people sit down at the church together, as though they were brethren, the minister calls you brethren, but he won't speak to you, or own you as such; his people are his brethren, no doubt, but then it is in such a mysterious sense, that you will have to read some German theologian in order to comprehend it. That person is "your very dear brother," or "your very dear sister," but if you are in distress, go to them and see if they will assist you. I do not believe in such a religion as that. I would have those who profess to be brethren, believe that "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," applies to every member of Christ's church, and that they all ought to carry it out to the utmost of their abilities.

II. Secondly, WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THIS COMMAND? Why does God say "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people!"

The first reason is because *God loves to see his people look happy*. The Roman Catholic supposes that God is pleased with a man if he whips himself, walks barefooted for many miles, and torments his body. I am certain if I were to see anyone do that, I should say "Poor soul, give him a pair of shoes; do take that whip from him, I cannot bear to see him so." And as I believe that God is infinitely more benevolent than I am, I cannot suppose that he would take pleasure in seeing blood run down a man's back, or blisters rising on his feet. If a man would please God, he had better make himself as happy as he can. When I am by the sea-side, and the

tide is coming in, I see what appears to be a little fringe, looking almost like a mist; and I ask a fisherman what it is. He tells me there is no mist there; and that what I see are all little shrimps dancing in ecstasy, throwing themselves in convulsions and contortions of delight. I think within myself, "Does God make those creatures happy, and did he make me to be miserable? Can it ever be a religious thing to be unhappy?" No; true religion is in harmony with the whole world; it is in harmony with the sun and moon and stars; and the sun shines and the stars twinkle; it is in harmony with all the world; and the world has flowers in it and leaping hills, and carolling birds; it has joys in it; so I believe religion was meant to have joys in it; and I hold it to be an irreligious thing to go moping miserably through God's creation. You cannot help it sometimes, just as sins will overtake you, but happiness is a very virtue. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works," which means not so much eating and drinking, as the living with a joyous countenance, and walking before God, believing in his love, and rejoicing in his grace.

Again, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people;" because *uncomfortable Christians often dishonour religion*. Look at my friend who is come here to-night with such a sorrowful countenance. Yesterday, he had a new servant in his house, and when she went down into the kitchen, she said to her fellow-servant, "Is not our master a pious man?" "Yes, surely." "I thought so because he looks so miserable." Now that is a disgrace to religion. Whenever a Christian man sinks under affliction; when he does not seek grace from God to battle manfully with his sea of troubles; when he does not ask his father to give him a great weight of consolation whereby he shall be able to endure in the evil day, we may say he does dishonour to the high, and mighty, and noble principles of Christianity, which are fitted to bear a man up in times of the very deepest affliction. It is the boast of the gospel that it lifts men above trouble; it is one of the glories of our Christianity, that it makes us say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." But when the Christian gets sad and miserable, run to him, brother; wipe that tear from his eye, tell him to cheer up, or at least if he is sad, not to let the world see it; if he fasts, let him anoint his head, and wash his face, that he appear not unto men to fast. Let his garments be always white, and let his head lack no oil; let him be happy; for so he giveth credit to religion.

Again, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people;" because *a Christian in an uncomfortable state cannot work for God much*. Break a poor man's heart and let him come on this platform with a grieved and agonizing spirit; and oh! what a want of power there will be in him! He wants all his time for his own sighs and groans, and will have none to spend upon God's people. We have seen broken-hearted ministers who have sadly lamented that when in trouble, they have found themselves unable to declare God's truth as they could wish. It is when the mind is happy, that it can be laborious. Nothing hurts the man whilst he can keep all right with heaven, and feel it so; whilst he can say that God is his own God, he can work night and day, and scarcely feel fatigued. But take away his comforts and his joys, and then one day's labour distracts his nerves and shatters all his mind. Then comfort God's people, because bruised reeds give little music, and the smoking flax makes little fire. "Comfort ye, comfort ye" the saints, for they will work ten times better when their minds have once been made comfortable.

Again, "Comfort ye" God's people, because *ye profess to love them*. You call that poor aged cripple, loitering home to-night, leaning on her crutch, your sister; do you know that she will go to bed to-night supperless? Only once has she tasted food to-day, and that was dry bread; do you know that? and is she your sister? Let your heart speak: would you allow your sister to eat dry bread once a day, and have nothing else? No; out of love to her as your relation, you would go and comfort her. There is another poor brother who will pass you on the road home, not poor in bodily things, but poor in soul, distressed in spirits. Don't do as that person has just done—he has quickened his pace, because he says that old man makes him miserable, and it makes him melancholy to talk with him. No; just go to him and say, "Brother, I hear you are in the valley of Baca; well, it is written, they that pass through the valley of Baca make it a well, the rain also filleth the pools." Join yourself to him, for it is written, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." "No, sir," you say, "I intend to go to-night with one or two very good people, and we shall enjoy ourselves together, and be very glad to-night." Yes, but if they be glad you cannot comfort them, so go and seek out some

broken-hearted one if thou canst, some poor, sad, mourning one, and say, "The Lord hath appeared to thee of old, saying, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' God's mercies have not failed and, therefore, we are not consumed." Go and cheer him. What! are there no families near you where the head has lately been removed by death? Have you no bereaved friends? have you no poor in your streets, no distressed, no desponding ones? If you have not, then yonder Scripture might be rent out of the Bible, for it would be useless; but because I am sure you have such, I bid you, in God Almighty's name, to go and seek out the needy, the distressed, and the poor, and send them portions of meat. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

III. In the last place. God never gives his children a duty to do without giving them THE MEANS TO DO IT; he never bids them make bricks without straw, and when he tells us to comfort God's people, we may be certain there are many means whereby they may be comforted. Let me just hint at those things in the everlasting gospel which have a tendency to comfort the saints. What, child of God! Art thou at a loss for a topic to comfort the aching heart? Hark thee, then; go tell of the ancient things of former days; whisper in the mourner's ear electing grace, and redeeming mercy, and dying love. When thou findest a troubled one, tell him of the covenant, in all things ordered well, signed, sealed, and ratified; tell him what the Lord hath done in former days, how he cut Rahab and wounded the dragon; tell him the wondrous story of God's dealings with his people. Tell him that God who divided the Red sea can make a highway for his people through the deep waters of affliction; that he who appeared in the burning bush which was not consumed, will support him in the furnace of tribulation. Tell him of the marvellous things which God has wrought for his chosen people: surely there is enough there to comfort him. Tell him that God watcheth the furnace as the goldsmith the refining pot.

"Thy days of trial then,
Are all ordained by heaven;
If he appoint the number 'ten,'
You ne'er shall have eleven."

If that does not suffice, tell him of his present mercies; tell him that he has much left, though much is gone. Tell him there is "now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;" tell him that now he is accepted in the beloved; tell him that he is now adopted, and that his standing is safe. Tell him that Jesus is above, wearing the breast-plate, or pleading his cause. Tell him that though earth's pillars shake, God is a refuge for us; tell the mourner that the everlasting God faileth not, neither is weary. Let present facts suffice thee to cheer him.

But if this is not enough, tell him of the future; whisper to him that there is a heaven with pearly gates and golden streets; tell him that

"A few more rolling suns at most,
Will land him on fair Canaan's coast."

and therefore he may well bear his sorrows. Tell him that Christ is coming, and that his sign is in the heavens, his advent is near, he will soon appear to judge the earth with equity, and his people in righteousness. And if that suffice not, tell him all about that God who lived and died. Take him to Calvary; picture to him the bleeding hands, and side, and feet; tell him of the thorn-crowned King of grief; tell him of the mighty Monarch of woe and blood, who wore the scarlet of mockery which was yet the purple of the empire of grief; tell him that he himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree. And if I have not said enough, go to thy Bible, read its pages, bend thy knee and ask for guidance, and then tell him some great and precious promise, that so thou mayest accomplish thy mission, and comfort one of God's people.

I have but a few words to say to some, who I grieve to think want no comfort. They want something else before they can be comforted. Some of my hearers are not God's people; they have never believed in Christ, nor fled to him for refuge. Now I will tell you briefly and plainly the way of salvation. Sinner! know that thou art in God's sight guilty, that God is just and that he will punish thee, for thy sin. Hark thee, then: there is only one way by which thou canst escape, and it is this: Christ must be thy substitute. Either thou must die, or Christ must die for thee. Thy only refuge is faith in Jesus Christ, whereby thou shalt be assured that Christ did really and actually shed his blood for thee. And if you are able to believe that Christ died for you, I know it will cause you to hate sin, to seek for Christ, and to love and serve him world without end. May God bless all, forgive us our sins, and accept our souls for Jesus's sake!

THE CHRISTIAN ALTAR AND PRIESTHOOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 19, 1858,

BY THE REV. DANIEL ACE.

(Curate of St. James's, Clerkenwell; and Member of St. John's College, Cambridge,)

AT ST. JAMES' CHURCH, CLERKENWELL.

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."—Hebrews iv. 14.

EVERY candid reader of the Bible will readily admit, that the Epistle to the Hebrews, requires of every one engaged in its perusal more than ordinary attention to understand it fully.

Its arguments are to be weighed, and its expressions compared, that its scope and design may be comprehended. It is so replete with matter, that its points of discussion admit of a variety of illustration and abundant research. It is, therefore, not a matter of surprise or wonder, that the learned John Owen should have written two ponderous volumes of elaborate learning and solid divinity on this very epistle. At the outset, it is obvious that there is something unusual. Its commencement differs from the customary style of other epistles contained in the Sacred Volume. It has no salutation. From internal evidence we are to *infer* to whom it is addressed. Even to persons who were well acquainted with Jewish phraseology and customs;—to individuals who had learned Moses' law, and the consequences of despising it;—to those who had need of much patience, through grievous afflictions, and who were in danger of apostatizing from the faith;—to such as were designated, holy brethren of the author, and were initiated into a new and holy profession.

Now, as to the author's object in writing, it seems to have been with a view to induce the Christian converts from Judaism, to adhere to the Christian faith, and to confirm their practices, by demonstrating that the utility of the Mosaic economy was to bring them to Christ. And further, the writer argues, that the regulations of the said economy were only preparatory, and their signification prefigurative. Indeed, all the rites and ceremonies were but 'a shadow of good things to come.' And, also, he evinces, that in the gospel of Christ is to be found the substance of all antecedent institutions; an economy which admits of no change; and a revelation—the *last* of which made by God to mankind for their sole benefit—a revelation which is worthy of universal acception. It contains the ideal of perfection. Do the Jews read the law and the prophets? Do they trust in Moses? Let them read what the Supreme Being hath spoken to us in these last days about his will, as to man's duty and salvation. Christ is the last and greatest teacher. His dignity is apparent, both in his person and office. He is not a servant, as Moses was, but the Lord of the universe, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the true image of Deity. Was the law ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator, viz., Moses? Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. As a being endowed with sovereign power, he is exalted far above the angels; for, "by inheritance he hath obtained a more excellent name than they," even above that of the highest archangel, as being the object of supreme worship. "And let all the angels of God worship him," is the command of the eternal Father. This last revelation coming from so high an authority is ample for all purposes of salvation.

But it was necessary for so exalted a character in becoming our Mediator and teacher to invest himself with a nature and a form accommodated to a level with our capacities. He, therefore, condescended to ally himself to our humanity, taking not upon himself the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham: becoming not only a man to bring many sons unto glory, to

destroy him that hath the power of death, that is to say, the devil, and from experience to be able to succour the tempted and sorrowing sons of humanity; but took upon him the seed of Abraham, as the promised Messiah and the Lawgiver to supersede Moses,—the Shiloh unto whom the gathering of the people should be,—the Great Teacher from whom grace and truth were to emanate. Thus, the mission of Christ is proved to be far more exalted, and his teaching much more extensive than that of Moses.

But, admitting that the Jews concur in the previous reasonings respecting the inferiority of him who had been regarded as Israel's chief, what is to be said of their Aaronic priesthood? Is that to be swept away? That very priesthood, in a continuous line, from which their ministers in holy things descended? The answer is, Yes. Why so? Can such an embargo be laid upon the sacrifices of the temple-worship? If so, the reasons for this procedure must be obvious, or the hostility of Jewish worshippers will be provoked to madness. The reasons are apparent. The animal sacrifices offered in Jewish services, did of themselves and by their continuance, prove their inefficiency. They never made perfect the worshippers who presented them. And as to the priests themselves, they by necessity of nature must admit of a change and succession. Consequently the Aaronic priesthood must be very imperfect.

What, then, rejoin the objecting Jews, are we to have no tabernacle, no temple, no altar, no sacrifice, no high priest? Can we accept such an empty dispensation doing violence to all our cherished notions, and time-honoured practices? The response is given by the author of this Epistle under inspiration. There is a tabernacle, but that is a greater and more perfect one, than one made with hands: it is the true tabernacle which the Great Architect of the heavens drew out—"which the Lord pitched and not man." We can dispense with a temple; for, when this Mediatorial dispensation shall cease, we shall see God face to face, and his essential Majesty and the beatific vision of his Son will serve in lieu of, and be far greater than the temple of Solomon in all its glory. We have an altar, but it is that of faith. We have a sacrifice, but it is the victim for sin, designated "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." We have, too, a high priest, of an order more exalted than Aaron's,—after the order of Melchizedek—"for this man continueth ever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood." Such a high priest requires no successors by reason of death. And, what is further to be considered, is, that Jesus, the Christian's Great High Priest "needeth not daily," as did Aaron and his descendants, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people; he never did, never will, never could offer sacrifice for himself, but for others. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." And, when he offered himself, he, once for all, made an effectual offering for mankind. And, if this be the case, what can the author of this Epistle, St. Paul, write more? He pauses, surveys the whole scheme, and recapitulates the whole of his arguments contained in one part of this Epistle, in a single text, exclaiming with an air of holy triumph—"Now, of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: we have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." And in the text, exhorting believers to constancy under every trial, he exclaims, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."

We shall divide our subject into three parts.

I. Consider the Christian profession.

II. Consider the priesthood of the Christian church.

III. Consider the exhortation to Christians to hold fast their profession in the head of the church.

May God enable us to comprehend his truth, and profit by our meditations.

I. *Then, consider the Christian profession.*

What is it? The word Homologia in the original, in its primary signification, denotes assent or agreement, speaking the same thing. In the New Testament it signifies to confess publicly, to acknowledge openly, or to profess. We, therefore, read in 1 Timothy vi. 12, 13, that Timothy had "pre-

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fessed a good profession before many witnesses." And also a greater than Timothy, one greater than all, our Great High Priest, Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession. We find in 2 Corinthians ix. 13, that it means "a professed subjection to the gospel," or a rendering obedience to its requirements. In Hebrews x. 23, it is styled the "profession of our faith," or hope, i.e. the Christian religion; in the 3rd chapter and 1st verse of this Epistle, the high priest, whom we profess to own as our Master, i.e. Christ Jesus, is said to be the apostle of our profession. In our text, the profession is put for the thing professed, the Christian religion. Such is our definition. Now, many tell us that there is too much profession with the lip, and too little practice of religion in the life. This may be true and the fashion of the world. But we are not to discuss the attributes of the counterfeit, but to describe the characteristic of the reality. A real Christian profession must imply both the act and the performer. Something is done, and to be done, by one who avows his tenets. In the 3rd chapter and 1st verse of this Epistle, we read of "holy brethren,"—not sinners,— "who are partakers of the heavenly calling," and such are exhorted to consider the Apostle and High Priest of their profession, Christ Jesus. It is obvious that such a fraternity must be a pious one, and that every one, whom we may meet with in daily life, does not belong to this community. If a dissolute and degraded character with whom you may come in contact in the streets, were to exclaim in your hearing, "I am a professor of Christianity," you would either consider the party insane, or profanely mocking religious subjects. Some one, however, may remark to you, that the individual who has obtruded upon your notice, notwithstanding his strange conduct, is, nevertheless, a nominal Christian. He says of him, "I recollect when he was baptized. In fact, I was a witness at the font." But what of all that! Does the certainty of the man's admission into the pale of the Christian church prove that he, let his conduct be what it may, is entitled to the denomination of a Christian character? If not, then such profession is vain. It is worse than hypocritical—it is manifest ungodliness. Here is a person openly showing you that the principles which he has inculcated, and by which he is impelled to action, are not derived from the Christian system. As to practical purposes, he might as well have been born in a foreign land where the religion of Jesus is either unknown or derided. You may, in truth, tell the man that he is a very inconsistent person; for, the Bible teaches "all that name, the name of Christ to depart from iniquity;" and "that if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." It is plain, however, that either the man is deluded, or, that he is attempting to delude others. And, then, there is another class of men, which, in the walks of public life, must not pass unnoticed. They say, "*We make no profession at all, and that is the end of the matter.*" The religion of Jesus may be a very excellent system of moral truth, for aught that we know to the contrary; but, we do not understand it. And, if we declared we did, and asserted that we were living piously, we should be arrant hypocrites. Our lives are such—and we cannot help it—as not to be in accordance with the requirements of the Christian profession." Now, it is precisely with such a class of persons that the Christian ministry is called earnestly to deal. With individuals who avow such sentiments, we thus expostulate. If you are not professors of Christianity, it is high time you were, for you are imperceptibly posting your way to eternity. And in your career, notwithstanding your candour, you are somewhat inconsistent; for, you would not like to be designated as infidels. If so called, you would feel yourselves insulted. Though you say that you do not profess the Christian religion, you dare not deny it. And the fact of the matter is, my brethren, that you are related to your God by a tie of obligation that no power in this universe can dissolve. To be willingly ignorant of his will, when the knowledge of it is essential to your moral nature, is highly criminal; and to be recklessly negligent in Christian duty, when your eternal welfare depends upon its right performance, is with respect to your best and undying interests, virtually suicidal. It is quite right to be transparent in your conduct; but, unless that conduct be in

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strict conformity to God's law, remorse of conscience, agony of despair, and irremediable woe, must be your sad portion in the destiny of this universe.

But there are some who think that to live without God in this world is practical infidelity; a debasement, to which no mind but that which is radically bad or perverted, can condescend to stoop. They listen to good advice, and attend on the means of grace; their devotion is comely and externally proper in the sanctuary, and their attention is invited to the expositions of God's faithful minister. *They become enlightened.* An intimate acquaintance with God's word and men's duty is formed. The Bible is read with interest; a perception into the depravity of the human heart is realized, a consciousness of guilt is felt, and a sense of danger is experienced. *They become decided for God and the Christian profession.* They resolve to do their duty—to seek deliverance from sin, its guilt, power, and penalty; to have "their fruit unto holiness; that their end may be everlasting life. Such receive the gospel, "not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

Such decision of character may be characterised conversion; a turning to God with full purpose of heart; a being called out of darkness into God's marvellous light. Prayer is then sincerely offered for mercy and acceptance. Jesus, the Friend of sinners, is sought; and the merits of his blood are felt to be applied by a believing act through the Holy Spirit, to the earnest seeker for salvation. By this line of conduct, believers are accepted in Christ, and are placed in a salvable state. They are partakers with Christ, of his Spirit, of his love, of his life, of communion with his Father, and himself, and eventually of his resurrection and glory. They are also partakers with one another of the same grace, and common salvation, they live to promote each other's welfare, and to communicate according to each other's necessities. Such is experimental religion which leads to practical ends. They who embrace it, like the believers at Corinth, in St. Paul's days, of whom we read, 2 Corinthians viii. 5, that they "first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto" ministers and people "by the will of God."

Now, the Christian religion is not all feeling; it is holy principle in action. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation . . . teacheth us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Titus ii. 11, 12.

There must be a *continuation* in exemplifying the Christian character; no fits and starts. No withdrawing into the practice of ungodliness, and then returning with flaming zeal for Christ. No sinning and repenting. Let there be none of this vacillation displayed by you. But, show the "same diligence" to maintain Christian consistency as at the beginning of your profession and confidence. If there be any lapses, there is comparative failure in the work of personal salvation, and you may fall to rise no more. We desire, says St. Paul, that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end—to the end of life—to the end of your pilgrimage. Do not be laughed out of a Christian profession, understand the grounds of your confidence, the nature of your evidence of personal acceptance with Christ; study to evince that you have not followed cunningly devised fables; endeavour to realize in your life the unmistakable proofs of the Christian's assurance and joy. "Always be ready to give an answer to every man of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Do not let ungodly associates over awe you so as to be induced to compromise or conceal your religion. Be manly, and dare the world. Always declare whose servants ye are. With the mouth and life make confession as in the sight of God to the world—not necessarily to a priest. With the mouth confession is made unto salvation. This is the kind of confession God approves, and unless you make it, you are likely to become devoid of every holy thought and purpose.

"So let our lips and lives express,
The holy gospel we profess;
When the salvation reigns within,
And grace destroys the power of sin."

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In the obedience of all Christ's commandments you may have to suffer in mind, body, or estate; but be faithful, diligent, and patient. Ye have, and will have need of patience: but be not slothful,—continue maintaining your profession to the *last*,—followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. And when you have fully served God, you will fall asleep in Jesus' arms: and he will confer on you the crown of life. Having maintained your Christian profession firmly unto the end you will enter into rest.

11. *Consider the priesthood of the Christian church.* "We have a great high priest, that is passed into the heaven, Jesus the Son of God."

The word priest, in the New Testament is not employed as the designation of a Christian minister, however exalted. It is once used in combination with another word by St. Paul, in Romans xv. 16., to signify in a *figurative* sense he was performing sacred rites, as a priest, that is to say, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up or sacrificing of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. It is obvious that this text is not to be taken in a literal sense, for whom of the Gentiles did St. Paul slay? We, however, use the term priest in a contracted sense to signify presbyter or elder, the second order of the Christian ministry in the Church of England. Now, where there is a priest, there must of necessity be a sacrifice, and if a sacrifice, then an altar. Jewish and heathen priests slew material victims which were supposed to be acceptable sacrifices to the offended Deity. The Christian's high priest, too, offered up a visible and tangible victim, the only real sacrifice ever offered up for the sins of men. The marvel in the gospel scheme is, that the victim and the priest should be one and the same. But so it is; and this is our creed: our profession of faith. That Jesus, once for all, offered himself on a cross upon Calvary's summit. That was *his altar*. Where is there any other altar on earth for a propitiatory sacrifice? We repudiate every other as abhorrent to Scripture and reason, except that of our faith: faith in the Lamb of God once for sinner's slain: faith in him who made there on the cross, the only real altar on earth, "a full, perfect, sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." We know that there are some men who call themselves, in a sacrificial sense, priests, and the table of the Lord, an altar. But the pretension is imposture; it is solemn mockery; it is what the world justly denominates *priestcraft*. You never read in the New Testament the word altar to mean the Lord's table. In the Epistle to the Hebrews and in the Book of Revelations there is frequent mention of altars, but always with either a direct reference to the Jewish ritual, or a symbolical allusion to the service of the tabernacle. There was no altar in paradise on which a victim was immolated; there shall be no altar in heaven, when the mediatorial government of Jesus shall be terminated by his coronation, but the throne of the Eternal One. From the very moment that the piteous cry reverberated through earth, and pealed through the vault of heaven, "It is finished," sacrificial priests and earthly altars were for ever superseded. It gave the death blow to the priestly function of man. All the ransomed were placed on a level; and those of the sons of men that really embraced the profession of Christianity, and united themselves to Christ by a scriptural faith, were instant with life, a royal priesthood to offer up the continual sacrifices of prayer and praise.

We shall not appeal to quotations from the fathers, so called, by modern divines, if we were to, we could easily prove that the earliest of them did not call the Lord's table, an altar. We cannot, however, resist citing the statement of one so conclusive on the matter as to intimate the general opinion of Christians in very early days. Clement of Alexandria who flourished about 200 years after the birth of Christ, called "the terrestrial altar, an assembly of persons given to prayer, having one voice and one mind."—Strom vii. p. 717. Sylburg. Pass we on to our Prayer Book. Examine it. You cannot find in any of its *Rubrics* the word "altar." It was deliberately expunged from the second Prayer Book of King Edward VI., and in every subsequent edition, whether that of Queen Elizabeth, James I., or

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Charles II., it has been carefully avoided, and has not been permitted to be foisted into the directions of our Liturgy. If the preacher without violation of modesty can be allowed to speak of himself, he is bold to make the foregoing assertions, for he has carefully examined, with regard to this point, every edition of the Prayer Book now lying in the British Museum, and he avers that the word "altar," is not to be found therein, except in a text of Scripture occurring in the sentences read at the Communion Service. The said text is that of St. Paul, 1 Corinthians ix. 13, in which allusion is made to those who served at the Jewish altars being maintained by eating of the flesh of Levitical sacrifices presented on these altars; even so argues the Apostle, by way of similitude, "hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel;" see how the Apostle varies the phrase—not those who serve the Christian altar, there is no such expression—"but that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

Truly the word altar appears in the Coronation Service; but that is not a part and parcel of the Book of Common Prayer: not the production of our Reformers. It has been altered from time to time according to circumstances, and admits of considerable emendations which doubtless will be effected in due time. But we have a great high priest, and well for us that we have. We confess that we have sinned; and without shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins. Christ has offered himself to God as a sacrifice for a sweet smelling savour. His blood cleanseth from all sin. Good news for us!!

It was this offering that the faith of the Old Testament Church regarded. How was it possible—could the intelligent mind of a believer conceive it—that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sins! Nay, look to something else,—look to him, Who in his own body bare our sins on the tree, and though crucified in weakness, is now living in power in the heavens, and there exercising a sacerdotal function. He is our Friend and Advocate, even our Great High Priest, and, therefore, can enter into the holiest of all. As a priest he officiates at the throne of the Eternal One, not renewing his sacrifice;—for, he made that *once for all*, but presenting himself, as the victim of sin—as a high priest he can enter the holiest of all, and commune with Deity. But he is a *Great High Priest*, after the order of Melchisedec, and greater than any priest who has preceded him—for he has entered into the courts of the Most High, not as the high priests did under the Levitical economy with the blood of others, but with his *own blood*. Not like Aaron and his successors who could neither save themselves from sin, nor others, but in a figure; but this great High Priest has had no personal sins to expiate, and has made a real ransom for all others. He has passed into the heavens—into the empyrean chamber. How difficult it is for minds encased in mortal bodies to withdraw their thoughts from the sensual and visible, when engaged in Divine worship; and to concentrate all their energies on whatsoever is spiritual, invisible, and heavenly. Our adorable Lord told his disciples—"It is expedient for you that I go away." And he has sat down on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; showing us that he cannot locally be present on earth, but by his Spirit; and that being absent from us now is an exercise of faith in him. We regard him now as a Priest interceding, as well as a King Mediator reigning. He pleads that the victim of infinite worth has been offered for you. And the prayer is, "*spare him.*" Behold the ransom! Who is it that pleads! It is *Jesus*. That endeared name which is above every name. Jesus, who came to save his people *from*, not *in*, their sins. A great Saviour; "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him: and his blood cleanseth from all sin." He cannot pray in vain; for, he is the Son of God. And, therefore, he can lay claim to the Father's boundless love and mercy, whilst he fully responds to the demands of stern and inexorable justice. As the Son of God, there never was a spot of sin on his soul, yet he was associated with all the sympathies and tenderness of our humanity. Our nature is dignified by the Son of God in his own person before the Father's throne; he dieth no more; his priesthood is unchangeable, and to the remotest period of time his sacrifice and intercessions

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avail. He pleads for you and for me. "Save that sinner. I bore the penalty of his guilt. Deliver him from going down into the pit, since I have found a ransom. And the Father of Infinite Majesty, will not be able to turn away his ears to the all-prevailing Son who, as a Great High Priest, is consecrated for evermore. The Eternal Father proclaims, "It is enough. Be it according to your request." And Jesus, the Son of God, rejoins, by addressing us, "Son or daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee."

III. The exhortation to Christians to hold fast their profession of faith in the Son of God, as the Head of the church.

Hold fast. There is danger implied. There is a mighty struggle in every man's breast, but more especially in that of the true Christian, between the principles of virtue and evil. "Our heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Who can know it! Take heed, then, lest in any of you there be an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. And in the midst of your conflicts, amidst much distress, harassed with doubts and fears, not only with respect to your present state, but the awful future, you have to do with an ungodly world. Sometimes you are captivated with its blandishments; at other times you are overawed and distressed through its frowns. It may be that the harshness of the ungodly has wrung your heart; and, in the turmoil of the world, among crafty foes, your faith may be almost ready to fail, your hope nearly extinguished, and your love waxing cold. But cheer up, and hold fast the beginning of your confidence firm unto the end. Satan, the arch-foe, the enemy of God and your soul's salvation may assail you in various ways with his plausibility; and, if he find you unyielding, he may come in like a flood—he may pour forth upon you a volley of fiery darts which may overwhelm you. Ah, you may think, and reason thus with yourselves: "After all there will be a total failure; the conquest of faith will not be mine; nor the joys of heaven my eternal inheritance; after all my profession, oh, lamentable thought, I shall become a cast-away." Under such circumstances, the exhortation to you is to *hold fast*; and the motive to the performance of the duty is derived from the intercessory Priesthood of Jesus, the Son of God, the great High Priest of our profession;—derived from the fact of his intercessions for us now in heaven. Be your infirmities, difficulties, temptations, and perils what they may, *consider* the great High Priest of your profession. You are called to quit yourselves like men. You can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth you. When your own heart would betray you, and the world contemptuously treats you, and false friends forsake you, and even the pinching hand of poverty grasp you, and Satan hurl his hellish darts at you; remember that you have a Friend above that sticketh closer than a brother. Oh, he is a faithful Advocate; he will not fail to plead effectually for you. Hear his voice from the throne of his mediatorial glory—"Hold fast," with a tenacity as strong as life. Be faithful unto the end. Be of good cheer, wait a while, and you will have done the sooner. Persevere in duty, and you shall sit down with me in glory. Oh, then, never play the coward and fail. A thousand times, *never*, we exhort you. Never desert your Saviour. Jesus will never forsake you. "He is faithful that hath promised, and is able to keep you unto the end." "What shall separate you from the love of Christ! Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us."

2. *Here is danger anticipated.* Delusions may be propagated, perilous times may be coming, we know not what may happen; but in any circumstances we are called to *hold fast* the profession of our faith without wavering. Errors are now being propagated which make the profession of religion only a pompous routine of forms and ceremonies. Hold fast unflinchingly to the truths of the Bible. That blessed book, the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants. Whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. Recently, it was wisely proclaimed that the time was now come for the doctrines of the

Reformation to be held up to view, with uncompromising fidelity. Our fathers shed their blood for the truth as it is in Jesus. We, under any oppression, resolve by God's grace never to play the recreant. No, we will bind that truth to our hearts, we will labour with it to adorn our lives, and by it save mankind.

Be you, brethren, valiant for the truth. Whatsoever things are *true*, hold them fast, and exhibit them to the world. Try my preaching, and every other man's discourse by the touchstone of the word of God. Reject all preaching that does not square with it. A gospel without Christ, is lifeless, insipid prose. A discourse which detracts from the agency of the Spirit is not gospel; it may be *law*; but it is "the law that killeth." A treatise which is neither law nor gospel, but a jumble of both, reject, even if it were preached by an angel. Such preaching will not be allowed of God. *Hold fast* whereunto ye have attained. Give yourselves to God, and all will be consecrated to his service. You will not require to be told of times and places—discretion will guide you, and as ye have opportunity ye will do good unto all men, especially unto those who are of the household of faith. Hold fast the form of sound words; let there be no admixture. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews repudiated all unholy amalgamation of Judaism with Christianity; we likewise repudiate any alliance of the perversions of a past age with the simple truths of the Gospel, to be proclaimed in the present age. We have described your altar and your priest. We exhort you to offer to God, not your money, but yourselves, a living sacrifice which is your reasonable service. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Then, you can offer the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. You will do all the good in your power, and promote every act of charity to which providence directs you. And with the performance of such *sacrifices*, or *Christian duties*, (for that is the meaning of the original), God is well pleased.

Finally. *Hold fast, and you will be rescued from danger.* Christ says, "My sheep shall never perish, nor shall any one pluck them out of my hand." Christ will execute his purposes and secure your eternal interests. You profess to have embraced the Saviour; then, ever *hold fast* the blessed hope of everlasting life by depending simply on Christ by faith. Your Saviour, Jesus, is passed into the heavens to plead for you; then go boldly to the throne of grace, and cry for help; cry for succour under every sorrow, and for a supply to your every want. As his priesthood is unchangeable, so is his friendship. In all your afflictions he is afflicted; and when he sees you in the furnace of affliction so polished as to reflect his image—for his eye ever—watches over you for good, and his arm is ever extended to rescue you, he will call you up to him, he will extricate you from all your trials, he will introduce you to his Father, and appoint you to a mansion in glory. Oh, our text is replete with hope, overflowing with comfort, and a stimulus to exertion. It is a warranty that we can indulge safely the largest possible amount of unflinching confidence; in fact, that success is certain, and that heaven is ours. Oh, the Priest is now before the throne, performing the service of pleading for us in dazzling glory which fills the tabernacle. Soon we shall be there, if faithful unto death; then, we shall see him as he is. But his pleadings will then be over, and he will be on his throne without a temple, filling heaven's courts with his glorious Majesty: reigning King of kings and Lord of lords.

But Jesus, the Son of God, now our great High Priest to save, will soon be an all-terrible Judge to destroy. In his favour there is safety; but no where else. Flee to him, ye who deride him. Ye who say, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Rather, make him your friend, your Saviour, your advocate, your all. Then, in life or death, in danger or in safety, you need fear no evil; having such "a great High Priest, that has passed into the heavens," where is your home.

The Pulpit.

No. LV.

THINGS TEMPORAL CONTRASTED WITH THINGS ETERNAL.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 2, 1858,

BY THE REV. HENRY MELVILL, B.D.,

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IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, LONDON.

"Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed."—Psalm cii. 25, 26.

WHAT the Psalmist here does, and that too in very strong language, is to set in contrast visible things and invisible. To the visible he assigns the character of temporal—"They shall perish; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment." To the invisible he assigns the character of eternal—"Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." We shall make it our business to dwell on these two characteristics—of things which are seen as temporal, and of things which are unseen as eternal. There are two ways in which the contrast of the text may be made out. The earth and the heavens may be said to be appointed for a fixed time and then to vanish away; or if they are not thus transient our connection with them may come wholly to an end, so that they may have no permanence to ourselves whatever the period of their duration. It may be useful to consider under both points of view the temporary character which the Psalmist assigns to the material universe; we shall then be prepared to appreciate the description of the Creator as enduring while everything else shall decay and perish.

You have before you the record of a great appointment, including whatever is visible, and sentencing it to dissolution. The earth and the heavens must include all material things, and "they shall perish," is the comprehensive statement of the text. Is it, then, so, that the glorious and mighty fabric of the material universe is to last only for a time; that this solid earth, and those worlds upon worlds which we behold from its surface, have in them the elements of decay, and are at length to disappear from the firmament? Is

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there nothing permanent in all that stupendous machinery which rolls at the bidding of the Divine Architect? Have there only a few centuries, perhaps only a few years, to elapse, and then shall the whole be taken down, and star after star and system after system shrink into original nothingness? We must be careful that we do not overstrain the Psalmist's expression, or so interpret it as to do violence to other portions of Scripture. There may be much room for questioning whether there will be the actual annihilation of matter; whether even this earth is to be so destroyed that no vestige of it shall remain. It cannot be said that whatever is material will only be temporal; for we know, at least, that our bodies are not be annihilated, but that, having gone through certain processes, they are to be re-united to the soul, and remain in that re-union for ever. Without, however, supposing the actual annihilation of what we now behold, we may speak of the universe as destined to be destroyed, seeing that the systems which are to succeed to the present will be wholly different and wear all the traces of a new creation. It practically matters little or nothing whether matter is to be annihilated, or whether it is to be lost in new shapes and combinations, provided only that in either case there is to be so complete a removal of the existing system of things that the earth and the heavens may be said to "flee away before the face of him that sitteth upon the throne." This certainly suffices to affix a temporal character to all that is seen, and therefore to vindicate the Psalmist's statement in our text. And upon this we would fasten your attention. We would have you regard the whole surrounding universe, massive and abiding as it seems, as destined to crumble into powder on some approaching day of terror and of wonder, to become as "the chaff of the summer threshing-floor" when the Lord shall arise in his majesty and sweep away evil from his empire. It is not because for century after century the heavens have been hung with stars, and planets in majestic march have performed their unvarying revolutions, and seasons have followed each other in regular succession, it is not on these accounts to be concluded that there will be no such interruption of the existing order of things as is supposed in the assertion of our text. This would only be to take up the language and argument of the scoffers whose appearance is predicted by St. Peter, and who are to exclaim, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." The long unbroken continuance of the present economy is no proof that there is not to come a change: for "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day," and the sentence has gone forth—a sentence from which nothing material is excluded, a sentence on the mighty constellations of the firmament as well as on our own frail bodies, on the mountains, the forests, and the floods of this creation as well as on the insignificant insect, fixing limits to the duration both of the vast and the inconsiderable, the durable and the fragile; so that the immense universe, in all its departments, is to be turned at length into its own tomb, though the tomb, like that in which human dust must sleep, is to give up its dead, that they may be remoulded and reanimated. Wonderful contemplation! We have been accustomed to distinguish between what we

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count fleeting and what we regard as enduring, between the rock and the mountain, the flower and the moth. There are certain objects to which we are wont to ascribe permanence, and which enable us to assign dates and periods to less stable things, but which are not themselves exempt from decay. Who, as he gazes on the troop of glorious worlds which form the retinue of night, does not feel as though they were moving and bounding before him and around him messengers from a past eternity and heralds of a future—mysterious visitants who have looked upon this earth whilst generation after generation has arisen and declined, and who will still shine serenely when children's children are gathered to the tomb? Upon much that is earthly we can see traces of decay, which almost prepare us to expect dissolution; but the heavens, with their brilliant and interminable throng of stars, appear for ever the same. No storms displace any portion of their lustre; history brings us no rumour of a change; and it seems hardly credible, that there is yet to be a day when even as the dry leaves drop from the fig-tree shall the hosts of heaven be shrivelled up and fall. But so it is; all, all is temporal; and I know not what is to give us so august and overpowering an idea of our God, or to put so impressively the mark of comparative worthlessness on every created good, as the assurance that whatsoever is seen has an appointed termination? Is it not, I ask, a confounding thought, that by a simple effort of his will the Almighty is to unhinge and dislocate the amazing mechanism of the universe, sweep away myriads upon myriads of stupendous worlds, and yet remain himself the great "I am," the same when stars and planets fall as when, in far back time, they first blazed at his command? Who amongst us does not feel rebuked by the truth now presented to our attention, if indeed he be living in preference of the objects of sight to the objects of faith? Man of pleasure! go on delighting thyself with things which gratify the senses; man of learning! continue to neglect the wisdom which is from above, and account thyself knowing because acquainted with certain laws and phenomena of nature; avaricious man! persist in digging for the gold, and consume thy days and nights in labours to become rich; ambitious man! still toil for distinction and spare no sacrifice which may gain a higher title; but know, all ye worshippers of visible things, that, immortal yourselves, you are cherishing as your portion what is finite and perishable. Appointed yourselves to an endless duration, ye place your happiness in objects which are to last for a time and then wholly to disappear; so that you must be left with all the soul's mighty capacities empty, without a shred of the material whence now ye seek your chief good. Yes, it is indeed a demonstration of the incalculable disproportion between the soul and those objects with which worldly men attempt to satisfy its desires, when we can write "perishable, perishable," upon all that is material; when, on the authority of the living God, we can predict a day "in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up;" when, in short, the flames of one universal conflagration shall make good this emphatic declaration,—"They shall perish; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment."

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But we observed to you that there was another sense in which this declaration might be taken, regard being had to the shortness of our own lives rather than to the finite duration of all visible things. It may be that such a representation as we have just laid before you, however powerfully it may address itself to the imagination, is not the most calculated to weaken the hold which the objects of sight so readily gain upon the heart. It may be that you will feel, if not say—‘The things which are seen may thus be only temporal; but they have existed for centuries past, and will probably continue for centuries to come, and where the duration is so immense there is nothing very affecting to the mind in proving that it is not eternal.’ Let us descend, therefore, to lower ground, and meet you where, if there be not matter for such sublime contemplation, there is, perhaps, for what is more touching and more practical. Even if there were never to come the appointed change over the visible universe, if the sun were never to be extinguished or the earth to be consumed, ye cannot deny that so far as yourselves are concerned the things which are seen will be emphatically temporal. There comes a day, neither can it be a very distant day to any one in this assembly, when our connection with earth must be terminated by death; when the sun must rise on us for the last time, though millions of cheerful eyes will hail his rising on the morrow. It is not that the stars will have been withdrawn from the heavens, that the mountains will have crumbled, the waters have been dried up: still shall the firmament be richly spangled, and still shall the landscape spread its varied beauty. But we shall be shrouded in darkness, and have no consciousness of the glory which still breathes and burns in creation. For a few days or weeks our decease may cause a void in the circle in which we have been accustomed to move; but even this will soon be filled, while in the great family and mechanism of nature there will be no effect produced by our being gathered to our fathers. The sun will shine as brightly, and the flowers bloom as sweetly, and the birds sing as cheerily. It is a very affecting thing to those who have just watched the last struggle of one whom they dearly loved to look out on the joyous face of nature, and to see that everything goes on unaffected by their loss. They do well to darken their windows;—the trees and the stars and the rivers have no sympathy with them; they wave and sparkle and foam as though it were nothing to the inanimate creation that the happiness of a household had been suddenly crushed.

But will ye not allow, that, forasmuch as there is to be this total separation between you and the things which “waxed old like a garment,” these things are to be called temporal, whatever their duration? And since, however attractive, however desirable, however gratifying these things may be, it is unavoidable that our connection with them must be brief and our separation from them final, will ye not confess that it cannot be the part of wisdom to place our affection on them, and to devote our days to their acquisition? Indeed, the simple consideration that we must soon die, and the sense that we can take nothing with us from this earth, ought to suffice to persuade us of the great madness of living to the present rather than the future. If we come down to any one of yourselves who is actually engrossed with worldly objects,

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and preach to him, as it were, over the shroud and the coffin, we take the course which ought to be, on all just calculations, the most effectual. It is not that we depreciate that which he prizes, for this might rouse his indignation and leave him to count us no fair judges of the things which he sought. We give him the whole benefit of the supposition that there is an actual worth in all the objects of his pursuit; at least, we will not inflame all his prejudices by entering into debate to show that they are barren and unsatisfying. We ply him simply with the fact that these things are but temporal in respect to him, whatever they may be in themselves; and though he might show a languid attention if we referred only to some great change which was to pass over the universe, ought he not to hearken with the most excited and interested feelings as we derive the temporal character of all material good from the certainty of his own dissolution? We will not argue with the sensualist in the midst of the fascinating objects wherein he delights; we will not argue with the miser whilst the gold is glittering before him; we will not argue with the philosopher as the broad arch of the heavens fixes his study; but we will argue with them all amid the graves of a churchyard, filled with the dead of all ages and of all ranks. Knowing, as ye must know, that what happened to those whose epitaphs ye have just been reading must happen to yourselves, will ye resort to the pursuit of riches, or of pleasure, or of science, or of honour, just as though you had no demonstration that "the world passeth away, and the fashion thereof?" Will ye not rather, though ye be not affected as the vision rises before you of the pillars of the universe tottering, and of one terrific flame enwrapping the heavens and the earth—will ye not withdraw from the sanctuary with the conviction as to all visible things that "they shall perish; as a vesture shalt thou change them: they shall wax old like a garment?"

Let us now turn briefly to the other part of the Psalmist's assertion. We have examined the statement as to the perishable character of all created things; let us now see how he addresses the Creator, and sets his eternity in contrast with the finite duration of all the works of his hands. He first describes God as the author of all created things: "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands." And then, after declaring their ephemeral character, he adds, "But thou shalt endure; thou art the same, thy years shall have no end." Thou, O God, art indeed eternal. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." We speak of other things besides God as eternal—of "eternal happiness," "eternal life," but it is only when we use the term of God that we use it in its large and unqualified sense; it is only of God that we can affirm the absence of all beginning as well as of all end. Other beings besides God may have never to end, but none other has never commenced. And we must again call upon you to observe the augustness and sublimity of the fact that the Almighty is to remain unchanged and unchangeable when the very heavens grow old, and sun and stars are dim with age. We know not of what mighty revolutions this material universe has already been the scene; but there are in-

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dications of vast successive changes, requiring periods which almost baffle our calculations, and forcing us to travel back, till we are almost lost in remote time, in order to imagine their occurrence; and then we have to go forward, expecting fresh revolutions, and endeavouring, though vainly, to anticipate a season when the present system shall give place to a different; so that even the material universe seems constructed for a period which defies our arithmetic. We know, indeed, that there must have been a time when God was literally alone; but the further we investigate the farther does the time appear to recede; and we know also that there is to come a time when "the heavens shall be rolled up as a scroll," but on their bright and glorious face we can read as yet no signs of antiquity. And, nevertheless, immense as the duration is which is thus to be assigned to the material universe, it is a mere point and nothing in the existence of God; so that when the mighty period shall have waned to a close, God is only to be what he was and where he was before that "beginning" in which he "created the heavens and the earth." I know not how to convey to you my thoughts of the grandeur of God as depicted by this fact. Well might the prophet say of him, "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing." We are in the habit of contrasting, as we before said, what we reckon transient with what we reckon comparatively permanent. We speak of the shortness of human life, and we appeal mournfully to the tree of the forest, which endures, perhaps, for centuries, whilst we are limited to three score years and ten. The tree lives but an inconsiderable time, if we compare its age with that of the mountain on whose side it grows; the mountain itself may be but of recent formation if compared with the rocks on which it is based; and these rocks may be but as of yesterday in comparison with the heavens, by whose revolutions we strive to reckon up their age. But let man decay, let the forests wither, let the mountains subside, let the rocks crumble, yea, let the very heavens cease from what we are wont to call their everlasting march, and God will have undergone no change throughout this immeasurable series of revolutions; "I am that I am" when this series commenced, "I am that I am" when this series shall have closed.

But though eternity is thus to be affirmed of God in a sense in which it cannot be of anything besides, there are beings and things which are eternal in the ordinary acceptation of the word. We may speak of the visible world as temporal, and of the invisible as eternal, because we are to inhabit the one only for a time, and the other for ever. Whatever these worlds may be in themselves, or to other orders of being, we have everything to assure us that to our own race they wear but the two great characters of temporal and eternal, of probation and retribution, the one continued through a short space, the other indefinitely protracted. In the very same sense that "the things which are seen are temporal," in the sense that we possess them, procure them, and enjoy them for a time, in that sense are "the things which are not seen eternal," even in the sense that we possess them, procure them, and enjoy them for ever." If you have the riches which are seen, they are but tem-

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poral, for you must part with them at death; if you have the riches which are not seen, they are eternal, for you shall never be deprived of their possession. If you suffer pains here, they are temporal; they shall end, if not before, yet with the close of life. If you suffer pains hereafter, they will be eternal; there is to come no moment of rest or of cessation. For ever is the light of God's countenance to shine on the redeemed, for ever is the Lamb to be with them, for ever is a river of pure delights to flow through their inheritance; and oh! for ever are the wicked to be banished from their Maker, for ever is the smoke of their torment to ascend, for ever is to continue the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Alas! here are things of which it must not be said, "As a vesture shalt thou change them; they shall wax old like a garment." And do ye believe this? Are ye thoroughly persuaded that the present and the future are distinguished by the characters of temporal and eternal? Then what meaneth this devotion of your energies to what is earthly and perishable? What meaneth this setting of the affections upon shadows and upon baubles? What meaneth this languor and indifference in religion? My brethren, the grand object of practical Christianity is to gain its rightful ascendancy for invisible things. It is here that the struggle lies. Faith and sense, these are the contending parties, and ye are under the dominion of the one, or of the other—judge ye which; but let no one call himself a believer in the reality and superiority of invisible and eternal things, when he is manifestly engrossed with visible things. This were a direct contradiction both in nature and experience. It is not thus in the affairs and transactions of life. And faith, we wish it well observed by you, faith is precisely the same principle in common things and in sacred. There is nothing mystical, nothing unintelligible, about the faith required of us in the Gospel. "To believe," when applied to God's Word, means nothing more and nothing less than "to believe" when applied to man's word. It is in no respect whatsoever a different mental act, neither will it be followed by different results.

We would, therefore, in conclusion, impress upon you the importance of diligently examining whether or no you actually believe the Bible. We quite feel that you may regard this as a very strange injunction, seeing that you bear the name of Christian, and unreservedly acknowledge the inspiration of Scripture. But again and again would we tell you, that what would not pass for faith when the testimony is human ought not to pass for faith when the testimony is Divine. The truths of the Bible are of such a nature that there can be no evidence of our believing them except our obeying them. Do ye believe in the happiness of heaven? Not unless ye are trying to secure it. Do ye believe in the wretchedness of hell? Not unless ye are striving to escape it. You might be able to give me a very satisfactory account of the evidences of Christianity; you might be able to arrange an admirable demonstration from prophecy, and morals, and history, and internal testimony, of the truth of Christ's mission; but we beseech you not to confound two things which are often confounded, the believing and the knowing the reasons for believing. It seems strange, but nevertheless it is quite possible, that a man may be able to prove a thing, and yet, after all, not believe it.

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And be not ye, therefore, satisfied that ye are not unbelievers, unbelievers though ye have been baptised in Christ's name, brought up in Christ's church, and are accustomed to profess yourselves his disciples, unless ye are living as those whose treasure is above, and whose conversation is in heaven. It was thus with St. Paul. He counted all things but loss; he despised alike the applauses and the insults of the world. He was neither attracted by earthly pleasures nor daunted by earthly pains. And why? Because he "looked not at the things which are seen, but at those which are not seen." He walked by faith; he made a full surrender of all earthly objects; he believed what God told him as to the future. And it will be the same with ourselves. Only let us believe that "the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," and every energy will be given (God grant it may!) to the securing through Christ an entrance into the "inheritance which fadeth not away;" "we shall so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal."

The New Park Street Pulpit.

THE CHRISTIAN'S HEAVINESS AND REJOICING.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 7TH, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."—1 Peter i. 6.

THIS verse to a worldly man looks amazingly like a contradiction; and even to a Christian man, when he understands it best, it will still be a paradox. "Ye greatly rejoice," and yet "ye are in heaviness." Is that possible? Can there be in the same heart great rejoicing, and yet a temporary heaviness? Most assuredly. This paradox has been known and felt by many of the Lord's children, and it is far from being the greatest paradox of the Christian life. Men who live within themselves, and mark their own feelings as Christians, will often stand and wonder at themselves. Of all riddles, the greatest riddle is a Christian man. As to his pedigree, what a riddle he is! He is a child of the first Adam, "an heir of wrath, even as others." He is a child of the second Adam: he was born free; there is therefore now no condemnation unto him. He is a riddle in his own existence. "As dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed." He is a riddle as to the component parts of his own spiritual frame. He finds that which makes him akin to the devil—depravity, corruption, binding him still to the earth, and causing him to cry out, "O wretched man that I am;" and yet he finds that he has within himself that which exalts him, not merely to the rank of an angel, but higher still—a something which raises him up together, and makes him "sit together with Christ Jesus in heavenly places." He finds that he has that within him which must ripen into heaven, and yet that about him which would inevitably ripen into hell, if grace did not forbid. What wonder, then, beloved, if the Christian man be a paradox himself, that his condition should be a paradox too? Why marvel ye, when ye see a creature corrupt and yet purified, mortal and yet immortal, fallen but yet exalted far above principalities and powers—why marvel ye, that ye should find that creature also possessed of mingled experience, greatly rejoicing, and yet at the same time, "in heaviness through manifold temptations."

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I would have you this morning, look first of all at *the Christian's heaviness*: he is "in heaviness through manifold temptations;" and then, in the next place, at *the Christian's great rejoicing*.

I. In the first place, **HIS HEAVINESS**. This is one of the most unfortunate texts in the Bible. I have heard it quoted ten thousand times for my own comfort, but I never understood it till a day or two ago. On referring to most of the commentaries in my possession, I cannot find that they have a right idea of the meaning of this text. You will notice that your friends often say to you when you are in trouble, "There is a needs be for this affliction;" there is a needs be, say they, "for all these trials and troubles that befall you." That is a very correct and scriptural sentiment; but that sentiment is not in the text at all. And yet, whenever this text is quoted in my hearing, this is what I am always told, or what I conceive I am always told to be the meaning,—that the great temptations, the great trials which befall us, have a needs be for them. But it does not say so here: it says something better; not only that there is a needs be for our temptations, but that there is a needs be for our heaviness under the temptation. Now, let me show you the difference. There is a man of God, full of faith—strong; he is about to do his Master's work, and he does it. God is with him, and gives him great success. The enemy begins to slander him; all manner of evil is spoken against him falsely for Christ's name sake. You say, there is a needs be for that, and you are quite correct: but look at the man. How gallantly he behaves himself! He lifts his head above his accusers, and unmoved amidst them all, he stands like a rock in the midst of a roaring tempest, never moved from the firm basis on which it rests. The scene changes, and instead of calamity, perhaps he is called to endure absolute persecution, as in apostolic times. We imagine the man driven out from house and home, separated from all his kindred, made to wander in the pathless snows of the mountains; and what a brave and mighty man he appears, when you see him enduring all this! His spirits never sink. "All this can I do," says he, "and I can greatly rejoice in it, for Christ's name's sake; for I can practice the text which says, 'Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy;'" and you will tell that man there is a needs be for his persecution; he says, "Yes, I know it, and I fear not all I have to endure; I am not cowed by it." At last imagine the man taken before the Inquisition and condemned to die. You still comfort him with the fact, that there is a needs be that he shall die—that the blood of the martyrs must be the seed of the church—that the world can never be overcome by Christ's gospel, except through the sufferings and death of his followers—that Christ stooped to conquer, and the church must do the same—that through death and blood must be the road to the church's victory. And what a noble sight it is, to see that man going to the stake, and kissing it—looking upon his iron chains with as much esteem as if they had been chains of gold. Now tell him there is a needs be for all this, and he will thank you for the promise; and you admire the man; you wonder at him. Ah! but there is another class of persons that get no such honour as this. There is another sort of Christians for whom this promise really was intended, who do not get the

comfort of it. I do admire the man I have pictured to you: may God long preserve such men in the midst of the church; I would stimulate every one of you to imitate him. Seek for great faith and great love to your Master, that you may be able to endure, being "stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." But remember, that this text has not in it comfort for such persons; there are other texts for them; this text has been perverted for such a use as that. This is meant for another and a feebler grade of Christians, who are often overlooked and sometimes despised.

I was lying upon my couch during this last week, and my spirits were sunken so low that I could weep by the hour like a child, and yet I knew not what I wept for—but a very slight thing will move me to tears just now—and a kind friend was telling me of some poor old soul living near, who was suffering very great pain, and yet she was full of joy and rejoicing. I was so distressed by the hearing of that story, and felt so ashamed of myself, that I did not know what to do; wondering why I should be in such a state as this; while this poor woman, who had a terrible cancer, and was in the most frightful agony, could nevertheless "rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." And in a moment this text flashed upon my mind, with its real meaning. I am sure it is its real meaning. Read it over and over again, and you will see I am not wrong. "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness." It does not say, "Though now for a season ye are suffering pain, though now for a season you are poor; but you are 'in heaviness;'" your spirits are taken away from you; you are made to weep; you cannot bear your pain; you are brought to the very dust of death, and wish that you might die. Your faith itself seems as if it would fail you. That is the thing for which there is a needs be. That is what my text declares, that there is an absolute needs be that sometimes the Christian should not endure his sufferings with a gallant and a joyous heart; there is a needs be that sometimes his spirits should sink within him, and that he should become even as a little child smitten beneath the hand of God. Ah! beloved, we sometimes talk about the rod, but it is one thing to see the rod, and it is another thing to feel it; and many a time have we said within ourselves, "If I did not feel so low spirited as I now do, I should not mind this affliction;" and what is that but saying, "If I did not *feel* the rod I should not mind it?" It is just how you feel, that is, after all, the pith and marrow of your affliction. It is that breaking down of the spirit, that pulling down of the strong man, that is the very fester of the soreness of God's scourging—"the blueness of the wound, whereby the soul is made better." I think this one idea has been enough to be food for me many a day; and there may be some child of God here to whom it may bring some slight portion of comfort. We will yet again dwell upon it. "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

And here let me for a moment or two try to explain why it is that there is an absolute needs be, not merely for temptations and troubles, but likewise for our being in heaviness under them.

In the first place, if we were not in heaviness during our troubles we should not

be like our Covenant Head—Christ Jesus. It is a rule of the kingdom that all the members must be like the head. They are to be like the head in that day when he shall appear. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." But we must be like the head also in his humiliation, or else we cannot be like him in his glory. Now, you will observe that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ very often passed through much of trouble, without any heaviness. When he said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head," I observe no heaviness. I do not think he sighed over that. And when athirst he sat upon the well, and said, "Give me to drink," there was no heaviness in all his thirst. I believe that through the first years of his ministry, although he might have suffered some heaviness, he usually passed over his troubles like a ship floating over the waves of the sea. But you will remember that at last the waves of swelling grief came into the vessel; at last the Saviour himself, though full of patience, was obliged to say "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" and one of the evangelists tells us that the Saviour "began to be very heavy." What means that, but that his spirits began to sink? There is a more terrible meaning yet, which I cannot enter into this morning; but still I may say that the surface meaning of it is that all his spirits sank within him. He had no longer his wonted courage, and though he had strength to say, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done;" still the weakness did prevail, when he said, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me." The Saviour passed through the brook, but he "drank of the brook by the way;" and we who pass through the brook of suffering must drink of it too. He had to bear the burden, not with his shoulders omnipotent, but with shoulders that were bending to the earth beneath a load. And you and I must not always expect a giant faith that can remove mountains: sometimes even to us the grasshopper must be a burden, that we may in all things be like unto our head.

Yet again; if the Christian did not sometimes suffer heaviness he would begin to grow too proud, and think too much of himself, and become too great in his own esteem. Those of us who are of elastic spirit, and who in our health are full of everything that can make life happy, are too apt to forget the Most High God. Lest we should be satisfied from ourselves, and forget that all our own springs must be in him, the Lord sometimes seems to sap the springs of life, to drain the heart of all its spirits, and to leave us without soul or strength for mirth, so that the noise of tabret and of viol would be unto us as but the funeral dirge, without joy or gladness. Then it is that we discover what we are made of, and out of the depths we cry unto God, humbled by our adversities.

Another reason for this discipline is, I think, that in heaviness we often learn lessons that we never could attain elsewhere. Do you know that God has beauties for every part of the world; and he has beauties for every place of experience? There are views to be seen from the tops of the Alps that you can never see elsewhere. Ay, but there are beauties to be seen in the depths of the dell that ye could never see in the tops of the mountains; there are glories to be seen on Pisgah, wondrous sights to be beheld when by faith we stand on Tabor; but there are also beauties to be seen in

our Gethsemanes, and some marvellously sweet flowers are to be culled by the edge of the dens of the leopards. Men will never become great in divinity until they become great in suffering. "Ah!" said Luther, "affliction is the best book in my library;" and let me add, the best leaf in the book of affliction is that blackest of all the leaves, the leaf called heaviness, when the spirit sinks within us, and we cannot endure as we could wish.

And yet again; this heaviness is of essential use to a Christian, if he would do good to others. Ah! there are a great many Christian people that I was going to say I should like to see afflicted—but I will not say so much as that; I should like to see them heavy in spirit; if it were the Lord's will that they should be bowed down greatly, I would not express a word of regret; for a little more sympathy would do them good; a little more power to sympathize would be a precious boon to them, and even if it were purchased by a short journey through a burning, fiery furnace, they might not rue the day afterwards in which they had been called to pass through the flame. There are none so tender as those who have been skinned themselves. Those who have been in the chamber of affliction know how to comfort those who are there. Do not believe that any man will become a physician unless he walks the hospitals; and I am sure that no one will become a divine, or become a comforter, unless he lies in the hospital as well as walks through it, and has to suffer himself. God cannot make ministers—and I speak with reverence of his Holy Name—he cannot make a Barnabas except in the fire. It is there, and there alone, that he can make his sons of consolation; he may make his sons of thunder anywhere; but his sons of consolation he must make in the fire, and there alone. Who shall speak to those whose hearts are broken, who shall bind up their wounds, but those whose hearts have been broken also, and whose wounds have long run with the sore of grief? "If need be," then, "ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

I think I have said enough about this heaviness, except that I must add it is but for a season. A little time, a few hours, a few days, a few months at most, it shall all have passed away; and then comes the "eternal weight of glory, wherein ye greatly rejoice."

II. And now to the second part of the text. Here we have something far more joyous and comfortable than the first. "WHEREIN YE GREATLY REJOICE." And can a Christian greatly rejoice while he is in heaviness? Yes, most assuredly he can. Mariners tell us that there are some parts of the sea where there is a strong current upon the surface going one way, but that down in the depths there is a strong current running the other way. Two seas do not meet and interfere with one another; but one stream of water on the surface is running in one direction, and another below in an opposite direction. Now, the Christian is like that. On the surface there is a stream of heaviness rolling with dark waves; but down in the depths there is a strong under-current of great rejoicing that is always flowing there. Do you ask me what is the cause of this great rejoicing? The apostle tells us, "*Wherein ye greatly rejoice.*" What does he mean? You must refer to his own writings, and then you will see. He is writing "to the strangers

scattered throughout Pontus," and so forth. The first thing that he says to them is, that they are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God;" "wherein we greatly rejoice." Ah! even when the Christian is most "in heaviness through manifold temptations," what a mercy it is that he can know that he is still elect of God! Any man who is assured that God has "chosen him from before the foundation of the world," may well say, "Wherein we greatly rejoice." Let me be lying upon a bed of sickness, and just revel in that one thought. Before God made the heavens and the earth, and laid the pillars of the firmament in their golden sockets, he set his love upon me; upon the breast of the great high priest he wrote my name, and in his everlasting book it stands, never to be erased—"elect according to the foreknowledge of God." Why, this may make a man's soul leap within him, and all the heaviness that the infirmities of the flesh may lay upon him shall be but as nothing; for this tremendous current of his overflowing joy shall sweep away the mill-dam of his grief. Bursting and overleaping every obstacle, it shall overflow all his sorrows till they are drowned and covered up, and shall not be mentioned any more for ever. "Wherein we greatly rejoice." Come, thou Christian! thou art depressed and cast down. Think for a moment. Thou art chosen of God and precious. Let the bell of election ring in thine ear—that ancient Sabbath bell of the covenant; and let thy name be heard in its notes and say, I beseech thee, say, "Doth not this make thee greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, thou art in heaviness through manifold temptations?"

Again, you will see another reason. The apostle says that we are "elect through sanctification of the spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,"—"wherein we greatly rejoice." Is the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ girt about my loins, to be my beauty and my glorious dress; and is the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon me, to take away all my guilt and all my sin; and shall I not in this greatly rejoice? What shall there be in all the depressions of spirits that can possibly come upon me that shall make me break my harp, even though I should for a moment hang it upon the willows? Do I not expect that yet again my songs shall mount to heaven; and even now through the thick darkness do not the sparks of my joy appear, when I remember that I have still upon me the blood of Jesus, and still about me the glorious righteousness of the Messiah?

But the great and cheering comfort of the apostle is, that we are elect unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. And here, brethren, is the grand comfort of the Christian. When the child of God is sore-stricken and much depressed, the sweet hope, that living or dying, there is an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in heaven for him, may indeed make him greatly rejoice. He is drawing near the gates of death, and his spirit is in heaviness, for he has to leave behind him all his family and all that life holds dear. Besides, his sickness brings upon him naturally a depression of spirit. But you sit by his bedside, and you begin to talk to him of the

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Arrayed in living green."

You tell him of Canaan on the other side the Jordan—of the land that floweth with milk and honey—of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and of all the glories which God hath prepared for them that love him; and you see his dull leaden eye light up with seraphic brightness, he shakes off his heaviness, and he begins to sing,

“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye,
To Canaan’s fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie.”

This makes him greatly rejoice; and if to that you add that possibly before he has passed the gates of death his Master may appear—if you tell him that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming in the clouds of heaven, and though we have not seen him yet believing in him we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, expecting the second advent—if he has grace to believe in that sublime doctrine, he will be ready to clap his hands upon his bed of weariness and cry, “Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly! come quickly!”

And in drawing to a close, I may notice, there is one more doctrine that will always cheer a Christian, and I think that this perhaps is the one chiefly intended here in the text. Look at the end of the 15th verse; “Reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;” This perhaps will be one of the greatest cordials to a Christian in heaviness, that he is not kept by his own power, but by the power of God, and that he is not left in his own keeping, but he is kept by the Most High. Ah! what should you and I do in the day when darkness gathers round our faith, if we had to keep ourselves! I can never understand what an Arminian does, when he gets into sickness, sorrow, and affliction; from what well he draws his comfort, I know not; but I know whence I draw mine. It is this. “When flesh and heart faileth, God is the strength of my life, and my portion for ever.” “I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” But take away that doctrine of the Saviour’s keeping his people, and where is my hope? What is there in the gospel worth my preaching, or worth your receiving? I know that he hath said, “I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” What, Lord, but suppose they should grow faint—that they should begin to murmur in their affliction. Shall they not perish then? No, they shall never perish. But suppose the pain should grow so hot that their faith should fail: shall they not perish then? No, “they shall not perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” But suppose their sense should seem to wander, and some should try to pervert them from the faith: shall they not be perverted? No; “they shall never perish,” But suppose in some hour of their extremity hell and the world and their own fears should all beset them, and they should have no power to stand—no power whatever to resist the fierce onslaughts of the enemy, shall they not perish then? No, they are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be

revealed," and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Ah! this is the doctrine, the cheering assurance "wherein we greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if needs be, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

One word before I send you away. There are some of you here to whom this precious passage has not a word to say. Our heaviness, O worldling, "our heaviness is but for a season." Your heaviness is to come; and it shall be a heaviness intolerable, because hopelessly everlasting. Our temptations, though they be manifold, are but light afflictions and are but for a moment," and they "work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" but your joys that you now have are evanescent as a bubble, and they are passing away, and they are working out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of misery. I beseech you, look at this matter. Search and see whether all be right with your spirits—whether it be well for you to venture into an eternal state as you are; and may God give you grace, that you may feel your need of a Saviour, that you may seek Christ, lay hold upon him, and so may come into a gracious state, wherein ye shall greatly rejoice, even though for a season, if needs be, ye should be in heaviness through manifold temptations!

CONFESSION, OR THE CONFSSIONAL

A Lecture

DELIVERED ON TUESDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 19TH, 1858, BEFORE THE ST. JUDE'S,
WHITECHAPEL, YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY,

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THE importance of the subject before us cannot be overstated ; a crowded meeting of the lay representatives of the different parishes and districts of London and its vast neighbourhood assembled yesterday at St. James's Hall to consider, and to commence action, upon this matter.

Our subject is stated thus, "Confession and the Confessional." There are two kinds of confession brought before the public attention ; one is the confession appointed by God, and the other is the confession or the confessional appointed by man and by man only : the question is, which of the two should command the submission of Christians : are we to submit to the confessional of man, or rather adopt, practise, and submit to the confession appointed in the Holy Scriptures by God Himself ? We shall not apologise for, or palliate in any way the confessional, or man's confession, which is fixed, decreed and practised by the voluntary victims, the members of the church of Rome : for if it be unscriptural it is equally as wrong in the church of Rome as anywhere else. It is in that church equally as opposed to God's plan, to God's word, and Christ's appointment ; and in this sense is equally to be condemned and opposed in the church of Rome as in any other denomination whatever. But then it is peculiarly objectionable in any Protestant Church, as its practice is utterly repugnant to the whole principle, scope and design of all Protestantism, which is man's deliverance in spiritual things from the thralldom and distinction of his fellow man, be he layman or clergyman, and that "nothing is to be required of any man to be believed or to be done, as necessary for his salvation, except what can be clearly and fully proved in the warrant and express authority of Holy Scripture." In Protestant communities, in Protestant churches, the practice is decidedly repugnant, and must not be submitted to, but calls for the most strenuous combination, in order that it be promptly and completely put down and crushed.

For the present, let us calmly and argumentatively investigate the claims of these two systems, and then we shall be better able to act in reference to our solemn duty upon this momentous question.

I. THE CONFESSION APPOINTED BY GOD.—Our Lord sets before us a simple and plain description of confession as appointed by God, and approved and sanctioned by Him, in Luke xviii. 13, 14 : "And the publican standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

First, there is self abasement, "standing afar off," and not "lifting up so much as his eyes unto heaven."

Secondly, there is true conviction—and a right knowledge of the seat of his disease ; "he smote upon his breast." Some smite their head only, disturb their intellects only to learn religion catechetically, to debate about doctrines ; and such frequently make great noise, and loud professions of their attachment to certain Christian denominations. But this publican knew that his heart was diseased, and that if he be really converted, he must be humbled and set right in his heart, "for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness."

Thirdly, the confession is made to God only, "God be merciful." And mind, there were at this moment many priests all about the temple, yet to none of them does he go to tell his case; he goes only to God, he confesses only to God. "God," he says, "be merciful to me;" so that his standing afar off, was not only on account of his humility, but also that he may be all alone with his God. Notice this in Christ's model case of confession.

Fourthly, he asks for pardon through an atonement. The morning and evening sacrifice was the usual time for prayer in the temple, the type of Christ's atonement was then being offered, and he says "God be merciful," or be propitiated to me, "a sinner."

Fifthly, he pleads as a sinner, does not palliate the past, does not offer anything in the way of human merit at the present, but pleads as a poor condemned sinner.

Lastly, Christ says that this penitent who confessed to God only, and did not confess through any priest, *went down to his house justified,* that is, fully pardoned and completely saved. This is the confession, the nature, the details, and the successful issue of that confession which is appointed by God, and sketched out by the elaborate description of Jesus Christ himself.

We may also allude to the leper who was cleansed by the Saviour, and was desired, after he was cleansed, to show himself to the priest; not to confess to the priest, nothing of the kind, but Christ first himself cleansed the leper, and then directed him to show himself to the priest, in order that there may be a public notification of the wonderful cure: that the miracle may be tested, not according to the fancy or caprice of the priest, but according to the most strict rules of symptoms, which had been furnished and specified by God Himself; the priest was to adjudge the man clean, or to adjudge him unclean; the fact is, that the leper must have been healed before the priest could pronounce him healed; it was not his pronouncing him whole, that made him whole; but it was his being whole, that led to the decision that he was whole; and then, as one restored to soundness, he was readmitted into the congregation of the visible church of the Jews.

It is as well here to introduce the case of David, to whom Nathan the prophet preached such a faithful allegorical sermon; and when David admitted the cogency of the case, and uttered the words, "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die;" Nathan, still faithful as ever, rejoined, "Thou art the man," after which, without hesitation, David frankly admitted, "I have sinned against the Lord." In all this there is seen the faithful prophet and the royal penitent, but nothing at all is recorded here about his confessing to a priest, nor does his own language intimate any allusion of his intention to adopt any such course. We have, on the contrary, his own express statements of what he had done, as recorded in Psalm xxxii., "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Also in Psalm li., "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation." David exactly took the very same course which the publican in the New Testament is recorded to have taken, in the narrative of our Lord already so fully dwelt upon in all its details. Moreover, while our Lord said, in some of His cures, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" the Jews at the same moment, thinking Him to be only a man, objected, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins, but God only?" Our Lord did not reply, and say, "Under my system, my ministers are to forgive sins;" but he admitted the truth, that none could forgive sins but God, and that he forgave them as God. Thus, while he used this power, and expressed it in the words already referred to, His disciples never at any time used such words, when they performed any miracles. And here we may strengthen our view of

the scriptural mode of confession already stated, by maintaining that the testimony of the entire of Scripture against auricular confession or confession to a priest, is unequivocal, plain, and clear. *Besides, there is the negative evidence of the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles.* There is no record of any such practice as confession to a priest in the whole of the New Testament. Not in the Acts of the Apostles, although there is recorded there a very detailed account of the practices of the principal apostles for a period over thirty years, is there one instance, nor even the slightest resemblance to one, of any such practices as the confessional being adopted in the primitive apostolic church. No mention is made of any such practice in the various epistles, although there is frequent mention of most of those things which constitute Christian teaching and devotion. Then there are three peculiar epistles, I mean those two to Timothy and one to Titus, from Paul; in which, if such a practice had any existence, there would doubtless be some notice taken of it in these three writings. Consider those to whom they were written, and he who wrote them; they were special ministers, with very large charges, one the whole island of Crete, and the other the principal city of Asia Minor, Ephesus. And while Paul most anxiously advises these two newly-appointed chief ministers in their important spheres, upon almost every detail of Christian doctrine and practice, yet he never, in the most remote manner, hints to them about any such thing as the confessional, or about anything like a confession to a priest; and yet, supposing the Romish or the Tractarian confession to be scriptural, surely, much instruction would be necessary to these new ministers with such fearful responsibilities. In the total absence then of any intimation from such an apostle as Paul, who also had such peculiar interest in these two men with such enormous ministerial labour and work, I cannot, you cannot, and every candid inquirer cannot come to any other conclusion than this, that the Romish system, or the Puseyite system, or any other system of confession of sins for absolution to any priest or minister of the Christian religion has no authority whatever from Christ or any of His apostles.

I may here further notice the practice of the New Testament Ministers, namely, their public preaching to large numbers of people, for instance, John the Baptist, about whom it is recorded in Matthew iii. 5, 6, "Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Here is no auricular confession, but, the very reverse, public preaching, public general confession, and public baptism; everything here is public, and nothing is private; also, in the same manner, you read in Acts xix. 18, 19, "And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." Here again there is nothing like auricular confession, but everything is public, before all the people. We must conclude then, that neither directly nor indirectly, neither in the Old Testament nor in the New, neither in the teaching and practice of Christ nor any of His apostles, in no way whatever is there any countenance given to the priestly confession; and that the confession appointed and sanctioned by God in Holy Scripture, is just what we have here plainly laid down, and most particularly and fully set forth.

II. THE CONFSSIONAL, OR CONFESSION APPOINTED BY MAN.—Let us now examine the confessional, or the confessional appointed by man, and let us candidly consider its nature and the authority by which its advocates, Romanists and Puseyites, sustain it.

I. *We notice the date.* Auricular or private confession to a priest, which we term the confessional, received no countenance whatever from the early Fathers. St. Augustine taught a contrary doctrine, for he says, "What have I to do with man, that they should hear my confession, as though they could heal my disease?" Also Chrysostom says: "Let the iniquity of thy offences be confessed in thy thoughts, let God only see thee confessing; therefore, I entreat and beseech thee, that thou wouldst continually make

your confession to God, unclasp thy conscience before God, and show thy wounds to Him, and from Him ask a medicine." This testimony is so far from favouring the Romish doctrine, that it directly contradicts it: for the council of Trent decreed, that "whosoever shall affirm that confession of all our sins to a priest, is not necessary to our obtaining forgiveness of them shall be accursed." St. Augustine and Chrysostom affirm, that this confession is not necessary and that forgiveness may be had without it.

Private confession was never thought of as a command of God, until nine hundred years after Christ; nor was it decided as such, till the Council of Lateran in 1215, and by this Council it was only enjoined as an ecclesiastical constitution; but that of Trent in the year 1545, decreed private confession to a Priest to be an ordinance of Christ, and absolutely necessary to salvation.

This is the date and origin of auricular confession, for it is clear that the thing was introduced by degrees, and this is the reason why I treat the Romish and the Puseyite system as virtually the same. Certain clergymen of a certain party are now trying to get in the thin end of the wedge; *obsta principis* is a wise maxim, and we must strenuously oppose the first beginnings of this serious mischief: let the confessional, in ever such a modified form, become the general practice in the Church of England, forthwith the Protestantism of the National Church is gone; and our beloved Zion which cost the nation so much, and for which martyrs bled, will soon be handed over, bound hand and foot, as a miserable victim to the tyrant Pontiff of the Seven Hills.

Secondly. Let us now consider the alleged scriptural authorities for the practice of this system; they are Matt. xvi. 19, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven:" also Matt. xviii. 18, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." From these two passages, there is no authority for priestly absolution, the completing act of the confessional system. The two passages may be treated in some measure as one, in the 16th chapter, Peter spoke for all the apostles, when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" and our Lord consequently addressed all through him in the 19th verse: this is clear by referring to chap. xviii. ver. 18, when he uses to them the same words. The passages refer partly to the inspiration privilege of the apostles, to fix what things in the old law were not binding in the new, partly to the fact, that the New Testament was to be written with divinely inspired power, so that the doctrines of Christianity, and the plan of salvation by Jesus Christ were to be explained and put forth with plenary authority from God, and were to demand full and unqualified submission from man: and partly to the exercise of due and proper discipline in the church, as is clear from the context of the latter passage, namely, verses 15—17, of the 18th chapter of Matthew, where this discipline is unmistakably laid down as a thing which may be carried out by every congregation of Christians. There is another passage, John xx. 21—23, "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." This passage requires particular attention, for it would appear, that the general body of disciples were assembled at this time, as well as the apostles, as is evident from the 19th verse: "Then the same day, at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst." He was evidently encouraging them for their great business of evangelizing and preaching the gospel to the whole world; and in the gospel by Mark, we have supplied an important passage, which must have been uttered about this time. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;

but he that believeth not, shall be damned." (Mark xvi. 15, 16.) This passage explains the words, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained;" the power given is the power to preach and proclaim, that he that believeth in this gospel of Christ shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned; a power which may be exercised by every man, no matter who he may be, who declares the plan of salvation to those who may be hearing him: this is the fair and true way to explain this rather difficult passage of St. John. *There is another way proposed, which is, that the apostles, because they could discern spirits, had a special and exclusive power of pardoning; but this cannot be the true exposition, as such a power appears to have been rarely granted to the apostles: it is certain the apostles did not ordinarily exercise any such power. One thing is conclusively palpable, that these words did not convey to any man, however high or exalted his position in the Christian Church, the authority or power to forgive whom he will and to condemn whom he will: it is blasphemously presumptuous to put such a construction upon the passage. Who can conceive that the God of heaven, and of earth has deputed or delegated his own peculiar right, power and prerogative of forgiving sins to any miserable creature of a moment? The apostles had no such power given them, and consequently no other minister can lay claim to any such prerogative.*

Thirdly. Further, the case is impossible. Indeed, such a power, any creature, however exalted, is evidently unequal to; it involves the power and faculty ordinarily at every time, and under every circumstance, of thoroughly knowing the thoughts of men's hearts; complete forgiveness could only be granted by a person having such a power, and as man is, by his finite nature, thoroughly incapable of satisfactorily exercising any such faculty, the matter is palpably impossible.

Fourthly. Besides, such a plan must lead to awful blasphemy, because such a priest as is supposed to be exercising this assumed power, must frequently meet with cunning, insincere and hypocritical penitents; and, supposed to be standing in the stead of God, he, in his absolution, must inevitably be representing God as doing that, which it is horrible to think of, namely, giving peace and pardon to such abominable supposed penitents to whom we have alluded.

*Fifthly. One passage more claims our attention; not because the passage is obscure and difficult of explanation, but simply because we would not even seem to be unfair in this investigation: on the contrary, we desire to examine thoroughly every passage, which may be brought forward to support their system. And now look at this passage which is in James v. 16, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed." We dispose of the meaning of this passage at once, for the meaning of it is plain; it does not teach the confessional at all, or anything like it: it recommends mutual confession of faults "one to another," a very different thing indeed, and it does not even hint at anything like the confessional system, under any phase of it whatever. Indeed one cannot but wonder at the impudence of any body of men, who could even, for a moment, hold forth this passage, as giving any countenance whatever, to any such system as that which we are now arraigning: it is evident that the putting forth of this passage, proves how hard pushed the advocates of the system must be, when they grasp at such a straw of an argument, as anything must be that could ever be extracted from this plain passage, which speaks not of penitents confessing to priests, but of mutual acknowledgements, and mutual intercessions to God for each other, and also which speaks of the end to be obtained, as *not the absolution from sin*, but the recovery by the means of prayer to God, from *bodily illness and disease*. *If Scripture then be consulted, her voice will not be found in favour of any such system*, but steadily against it, and always guarding with unswerving fidelity the high, the inalienable prerogative of its Almighty Author, that God alone can, and that God alone does forgive sin.*

Sixthly. This system is opposed to the benevolence of God, and the

sympathy of Christ. The Scriptures represent God as not thoughtless or careless about the repenting sinner, but the very reverse ; as ready to welcome the returning prodigal. "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke xv. 20) : and they teach us that Jesus is all sympathy. "We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ;" and "He ever liveth to make intercession for us ;" and therefore "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God through Him." Christ Himself says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out ;" and again He says, "Come unto me all that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This accursed system is not only an attempted robbery of the high prerogative of God alone, to forgive sin, but it is also by implication an insidious effort to pluck from the Redeemer's crown, the gracious and glorious diamond of *sympathy* for the repenting and returning sinner.

III. NOW SEE WHETHER THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND TEACHES, OR EVEN COUNTERANCES, THE CONFESSIONAL SYSTEM.

First. The Church of England does not propose her manual of devotion, her Prayer Book, as infallible ; for she herself professes, as a church, to be fallible ; it is clear then that she could never have intended that everything in the Prayer Book was to be considered perfect. Again, she has revised this Prayer Book, and corrected it, and improved it, and with the blessing of God, she will again improve it.

Further, in her 6th article, she has declared the supremacy of "Holy Scripture, as containing all things necessary to salvation : so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." Thus, while I, as a clergyman, have given my assent to the Prayer Book, it is an assent to the book, as a book—that is, to the teaching of the book as a whole, to what the book, honestly examined, is fairly found to teach. Let us then candidly examine the Prayer Book as we would examine any other book, and ascertain its clear intention upon this subject of the Confessional.

Secondly. Who are the principal persons, and from what class are they who say that the Prayer Book teaches this doctrine ? They are of a class, who have for some time professed to be dissatisfied with the Church of England, and some of them have already gone to Rome : they are traitors in the camp, their real business is to create a diversion in our ranks ; and, if they cannot Romanize our church, their effort will be to carry as many as possible with them to Rome. From the character then, and spirit, and practice of these persons, no confidence can be placed in their testimony in this matter, their heart is already in Rome, and they can see nothing anywhere but something like Rome. Nevertheless, let us notice their arguments in thus libelling our Church.

Thirdly. We would call attention to the absolution in our regular order of service, that from the place of its occurrence, must be the most important. It is the form of absolution, which is always used in every congregation of the Church ; it cannot be maintained for a moment, "that it is less comprehensive than any other of its kind, and from its important position must be that, which is to explain all other similar ones." The language of this important part of our daily and Sunday service is clearly expressed, "He (that is, God) pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his Holy Gospel ;" and in the same passage the minister's office is expressed with equal clearness, "He hath given power and commandment to his ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins." You see, that the minister's sole province is to "declare and pronounce" the manner and term of forgiveness, and nothing more ; it is expressly said here, that it is God alone that pardoneth and absolveth. The absolution in the Communion Service is of the same precise form, declaring that it is Almighty God, that is to "have mercy upon them, pardon and deliver them from all their sins."

Fourthly. We would notice the exhortation in the Communion Service. And here let me remind you what the minister's work is, whether he be a minister of our church, or of any other Protestant church; it is not only to preach in the pulpit; it is not only to go through the ordinary services of the sanctuary; surely, that is not a faithful minister, who thinks he has finished his work when he leaves the pulpit; who never goes to the house of sorrow, and the room of sickness, who never speaks to his people in private on the important things which concern their peace; who never stirs them up personally to repent; who never expostulates and reproves, teaching not only publicly, but from house to house the things that belong unto man's salvation. If I know that one of my people is living in open sin, I am bound to go to him in private, and strive to bring him to repentance; if any of our people be in sore distress of mind, if he be in much temptation, and if he have to bear up against any peculiar burden or spiritual hardship; if he have weighing on his mind the sense of some flagrant sin, and is doubtful about what reparation he ought to make, there is nothing wrong in such a person consulting his minister; and, in reference to such a case only, does the exhortation in the Communion Service allude. How often, too, have I known persons imagine, that they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and how necessary is it in such a case, that the minister or some godly elder should show such persons from the word of God, that who ever committed that sin never repented; and consequently the very fact that he is a penitent, proves that he has not been guilty of the unpardonable sin. If this be the duty of every pastor in reference to his flock, it is not wrong for such ministers to say in the exhortation, "Let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's word, and open" not his sin, but "his grief." And as to the benefit of "absolution," that is explained by the next passage, together with ghostly counsel and advice, "to the quieting of his conscience and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness." The word absolution in this passage can only refer to that already explained, namely, "declaring and pronouncing the terms of forgiveness." Indeed here is expressed only the benefit of absolution by the ministry of God's holy word, and no other absolution was intended by the church in this passage, for she gives no form of absolution here. This is the truth, for the church did so once when she was just emerging out of Popery, and did then appoint in the first edition of the Prayer Book, in the reign of Edward VI., that the form of absolution in the "Service for the Sick" should be used in the case of those who should come to confess their grief in private, before coming to the communion: but she subsequently expunged this authorization altogether, and by this act clearly showed her intentions and views upon this subject, and so far the Church of England stands clear of giving countenance either to secret confession or priestly absolution.

Fifthly. We now invite your attention to the ordination service for a presbyter. I intentionally use the word presbyter, for the word priest, as used in her services, is always used as an abbreviation for that word. The officiating bishop on such an occasion uses the words of Christ, when he was commissioning his apostles to go and preach His gospel. It behoves us then to understand what our Lord meant by the words, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." The words cannot mean receiving him for conversion, for the apostles were converted before: nor can the words mean receive the miraculous and other such gifts, for that privilege and power was especially reserved to be given on the day of Pentecost; therefore these words must mean, "Receive the aid of the Holy Ghost, for the faithful preaching of my glorious gospel: and in so faithfully preaching my gospel whose soever sins ye thus remit, they are remitted; and whose soever sins ye thus retain, they are retained; my gospel faithfully preached by your lips shall be salvation or damnation to them." "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned," or as in another passage, ministers are called a "savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." In the ordination service, the sincerity of all the parties is charitably supposed. The candidates for ordination assert, that they are moved and called by the Holy

Ghost to the office of the ministry; this declaration is taken as true, and thus the bishop uses the words already alluded to in the office for ordination of presbyters or priests. Here I am bound to admit that these ordination words are rather strong, not that they were so intended at first, but that they have been misrepresented; and Romanizing men do handle these words for their own ends. When the expected revision of the Prayer Book takes place, these words will be altered and brought into greater harmony with the doctrines and religious systems of Protestantism. A very slight alteration would put the words in the form of a prayer, and explain the terms as meaning the preaching of the gospel and the proclaiming the terms of forgiveness.

Sixth. Let us now examine the "Form of service for the visitation of the sick."

1. This service is for a particular class of cases, and cannot be made the authority for the general order and practice of the church.

2. As the communion cannot be administered without the presence of two or three persons, besides the sick person and the clergyman; it is evident, that nothing like auricular and private confession could be intended here.

3. The confession is of some weighty matter: the dying man may have injured some person in character or property, or some other way; and he is anxious that some reparation be made; it is quite right to allow this to be done and especially before witnesses; but surely this is not at all like auricular, private and priestly absolution.

4. Here again, I admit that the words of absolution are too strong, no matter how the service be explained; but this is no reason why they should be wrested to a purpose widely different from their original design; yet as they are thus perverted, and as they are too strong, an alteration ought, wherever there is a revision, to be made in this service.

5. But this service is practically a dead letter. Very few ministers use the service at all. It was put into the book on account of the great ignorance of the clergy at the time, but now it is unnecessary, and never used unless by the class of Romanizing clergymen already mentioned.

6. The civilization and intelligence of society now is inconsistent with the full carrying out of such a service. It is notorious to readers of history, that discipline was formerly carried out everywhere in the church on a scale that would not now be tolerated, and that public apologies used to be made in the churches by persons who had indulged in scandal and such offences. The service under consideration, may have had reference to such a practice, and as the dying man could not make the public apology and be publicly reconciled to the church, this confession and absolution may have been permitted to give peace of mind to the sick person. But again we say, that the service is now obsolete, that the words of absolution are too strong, and that the service is for a state of things that does not now exist, and consequently should never be used. I have never used the service, and never intend to use it.

Indeed, my friends, the wonder is, that looking at the whole subject—the time when the Reformers arranged those formularies—their just emerging from the darkness of Rome—the many difficulties which the Church of England had to contend with—the great alterations in the meaning of words which has taken place in our language during the last two or three hundred years—I say, the wonder is, that the Book of Common Prayer has so few faults, and that in the main, in the almost entire of the book, it is so scriptural and sound.

The time may come, and come shortly, when the book can be revised; until then, let us stand by the sound book, and let us not allow Romanizers or any one else to wrest the few passages now referred to, so as to misinterpret not only the whole letter, but also the unmistakable Protestantism of the book. The Church of England is by profession a Protestant and a Bible church: let us then stand by the old, true ship, and prevent any pirate or privateers from usurping her authority or destroying her.

THE EFFECTUAL OPENING.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 24, 1858,

BY THE REV. J. J. WEST, M.A.,

(Rector of Winchelsea, Sussex.)

AT ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, HERNE HILL.

(On the Occasion of the Reopening after the Fire there.*)

"Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."—Psalm cxlv. 16.

My hearers, in this verse, which has been applied to my own heart with some power to speak on to you—we have a great fact, and a great truth as to the experience of the people of GOD set forth—and while as a preacher in the Church of England, sound, I trust, in her doctrines, and attached to her creeds, I proclaim the doctrine—that great and grand foundation doctrine of the TRIUNE JEHOVAH—of three persons in ONE ETERNAL GOD—while I insist upon the fact—that the FATHER is GOD—the SON is GOD, and the HOLY GHOST is GOD—while also I declare the grand and the glorious doctrines of election, redemption, and effectual calling and teaching by the HOLY GHOST, and by that blessed SPIRIT alone and only—I want, while here I stand as a trustee of THE GOSPEL, to set forth before the people of GOD, and to sift all other hearers—that blessed, experimental, and practical pathway in which the tried and exercised people of God have to go on to GLORY.

Now David, in this Psalm is, (and as the heading of it in the Bible states,) in his own peculiar way, blessedly praising "God for His Fame—for His goodness—for His kingdom—for His providence—for His saving mercy." But I want, (and I do not think I am straining the verse that forms the subject that I am to speak on), I want to proclaim before you *that* which it so specially sets forth—the absolute SOVEREIGNTY of our GOD! And I purposely pause here over that statement for every hearer unmistakably to understand me—that GOD, is an ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGN—that according to that gigantic Scripture in the Book of Daniel, iv. 35—"And He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou." That HE acts as a sovereign in all HE does for the avowed safety, benefit, and blessing of His CHOSEN people. I pause then upon this stanza in the text I am preaching on—"THOU OPENEST THINE HAND"—and till THAT hand is opened man can do nothing. I should be a traitor in the pulpit of the Established Church if I did not insist upon that fact as stated in the tenth Article of the Church—and that Article stands based and founded upon that triumphant passage in John vi.—"No man can come to ME, except the Father which hath sent ME draw him." And in the sister verse—"All that the FATHER giveth ME shall come to me; and him that cometh to ME I will in no wise cast out." While thus I have the authority to preach before you that all the given ones shall come, (that is doctrine!)—I have also, for the comfort and encouragement of every exercised and broken-hearted sin-

* The Morning Sermon on this occasion was preached by the Rev. H. Melvill, B.D., Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty, and Canon Residentiary of St. Paul's.

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ner, here to declare from this pulpit top, to the mass of people now assembled before me—"Him that cometh to ME I will in no wise cast out." But, my hearers, they that "honour ME I will honour,"—and we must put the crown upon **THE RIGHTFUL HEAD**; for in the words of Augustus Toplady—

"No sinner can be beforehand with THEE,
THY GRACE is preventing Almighty and free."

Now then, first of all—bear with me, my hearers—"THOU openest THINE hand." In that hand there is treasure for **THE CHURCH**; it is the **FATHER'S** hand that holds everything for **HIS** children. But he knows when the opening moment is to come, for **HE** does everything according to His own everlasting decrees and covenant. "THY people willing in the day of THY power." There is a set time to favour every child of God. Now mark the fact—and is it not gladdening to hear it from the pulpit! is it not Gospel truth that in the hand of the Eternal God is treasured up everything for the church! We had the definition of **THE CHURCH** in the second chapter for this evening's service—**ONE LORD, ONE faith, ONE baptism; ONE God and FATHER** of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all; and I think in the chapter following, the 5th of Ephesians, it is declared—"CHRIST loved the church and gave HIMSELF for it."

Now the subject that I am to speak on is the "hand," and the "opening"—and in THAT hand is treasured up everything for the church of God. "THOU OPENEST THINE HAND"—and when that hand is opened the treasure is bestowed upon the child. We have also in the text three other great blessings that I would speak on to you besides the sovereignty and the opening of the hand. **SATISFACTION** follows the opening—also, mark the word before me—"the desire," and who the people are who have that "desire"—"Satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Now I take this passage accommodationally, (understand me,) as applicable to the state of the church of God. God opens His hand, and in that hand is contained everything for the special good of His own people. It may be trial, for there is such a thing, my brother and sister, in the experience of the church, as the cross-handed blessing. Joseph dictated to his venerable father when blessing his boys—"Not so my father"—he dictated to the venerable man—and have not you and I often under trial, and in periods of soul-exercise murmured out, "not so my Father!" But "*I know my son, I know!*" That hushes every murmur; and O! what a mercy practically to feel and know that we are in the hands of a COVENANT God, and that—

"E'en crosses from His Sovereign hand,
Are blessings in disguise."

But observe here, **SATISFACTION** follows the opening of the hand! And here I pause for a second that I may preach to you about the effect of grace in the soul. "**DESIRE.**" Not to take a higher test—"The **DESIRE** of our soul is to **THY** name." That is a "*token for good.*" If the heart is directed **CHRIST-WARDS**—if the heart longs and pants for salvation—if the heart seeks for evidence within that we are safe for eternity—if the heart desires to know—"am I one of the election of grace"—depend upon it, my hearers, that very desire is a test and proof that the **SPIRIT** of God is in you:—"It is God which worketh in you both to **WILL** and do of His good pleasure." And I as a minister of the Gospel feel that it is the very secret of my office in the pulpit to lay men in the dust of self-abasement, and to exalt Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as God over all, blessed for ever—not to allow any creature merit, not to allow any creature power. **ALL POWER** is of **GOD**—and this is so, both as to preaching the Gospel, or hearing the Gospel. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

Now, amidst this mass of people before me, allow me to ask, and I put it to you one by one—can you test yourselves by the secret which the text declares, and have you a desire after God the Saviour? Not, mark me, from a coward feeling of the dread of hell, but from the love, and in the exercise

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of that love, that is deposited in the broken heart, by the Holy Spirit of God! *DESIRE* is an evidence! my hearers. I am too old a soldier in the ranks of my Great Commander not to know that there are a mass of hypocrites all over the land, in London and in the country, that are holding high doctrines. But it is *one* thing to profess Christianity, it is *another* thing to be a broken-hearted follower of a despised Christ.

"No big words of ready talkers,
No dry doctrine will suffice,
Broken hearts and humble walkers,
These are dear in JESUS' eyes."

Mark the test!

"Tinkling sounds of disputation,
Naked knowledge, all are vain,
Every soul that gains SALVATION,
MUST and SHALL BE born again."

"Must and shall be." There is no doubt about it. It is not whether you will or whether you will not. God's will is his child's shall. God puts desire into the soul! and *the desire* is an evidential test of good—the desire in a broken heart—the desire to ascertain the fact—did that great and glorious GOD-MAN die for me upon the cross! There is a great deal of profession in the present day, my hearers—a great deal of meddling curiosity about other people. I do not think it is too common a saying for the spot I now occupy to declare that—"Charity begins at home." The great point for you and me in anticipation of that tremendous moment to which we must all come—a dying bed and a dying hour, is THIS—"Am I a child of GOD in CHRIST JESUS?" I ask you, have you a *desire* now! There may be, and I should be very much astonished in such a crowd as this if there were not several before me that have not got *that* DESIRE! I would breathe out a solemn prayer to the GOD I serve, as I stand here preaching before you, that the very subject I am here in weakness, and (in one sense), in fear, and in much trembling, endeavouring to inculcate before you, may be the means by which you may be brought to have an intense desire in your inmost soul that you are safe for eternity through the blood and victory of Christ. And if you came to-night into this HOUSE of GOD careless and indifferent upon the subject, that you may leave the place and go out of that door exercised and troubled in your soul, to know these things personally for yourselves. *DESIRE!* Look at the worldly man, and look at the professing man—look at the mere dead professors of the day, (the greatest enemies of the Gospel after all,) look how they covet, look how they desire, look how they strive after worldly things. Then listen to the blessed statement of our loving Lord—"Fear not, little flock, for it is your FATHER's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." A little flock in every time-state of the church's existence; a little flock throughout the habitable world. But when the great day of account shall come—when, to take the thrilling and striking words of the prophet—"When the flocks shall again pass under the hands of HIM that telleth them"—when HE counts up HIS OWN—(you who live in London may not in its practicality understand this figure so well as a countryman can, but this is the meaning of it, and if you have ever seen the shepherd standing at the half open hurdle counting each sheep one by one as it enters into the fold to see that they are all there, you will see the beauty and appropriateness of the prophet's word—and carrying out the imagery for ourselves, and appropriating it to the fact of that great event which must take place when "*the Great Shepherd of the sheep*" comes to tell out HIS OWN)—the redeemed will then be a countless multitude—and we shall all be there. But shall we all go into the fold! In that great day of account when God shall be sessioned on HIS throne, and before HIM all nations shall be gathered—then! mark me! only two tremendous sentences will be heard, only two divisions of persons to be made, sheep or goats, the one on the right hand, the other on the left, two everlasting telling sentences—the one—"Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"—

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or the other, (and do not call me harsh, I must be *faithful*, and it is God's own word,) or—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Now is there a *desire*? I put it to myself—I put it to you—Is there a *desire* within us to realise our safety for that tremendous day! What would you say of a surgeon in a case where, to save life, it was essential to amputate the leg! I can imagine some unskilful awkward surgeon, in a country hamlet, hesitating about it; but what would you say of a Brodie, if he had paused in such a case, if he delayed a moment even to take the knife and to cut off the limb! And what would be said of us in our pulpits if we failed from any cause whatever, or from "the fear of man which bringeth a snare!"—What would be said of us, as ministers of Christ, if we "shunned to declare unto you ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD?" Here was the comfort of the Apostle Paul, when about to leave Ephesus—"I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Not a piece of it; not a yea and a nay gospel, but that gospel which, thank God, is contained in the Prayer Book—which is inculcated in our Articles—and which from the Archbishop of Canterbury, down to the poorest curate in the country, ought to be sounded forth from every pulpit top in the land. It is this precious gospel I would preach to you; and I simply ask whether you have *that desire* which the text inculcates in your *heart*—the *desire* to "know your election of God"—the *desire* to know whether you are safe for eternity! Is it not an important thing! I think, if I remember correctly, the second chapter in the Morning Service typified before us the reality of two sisters—Mary and Martha—Martha careful and troubled about "many things," and her sister realizing the important fact, that "*one thing is needful*"; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." How many in this congregation are in Mary's position! How many that I see now before me, and around me, have got a satisfactory criterion evidence that they—(I will take no higher standard)—humbly desire in a broken heart to know whether they are of God. We may take the blessed example of the Apostle Paul—"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings"—or, as I believe I am correct in saying—"that I may have His fellowship and sympathy in all my sufferings." I was struck with the simile by the morning preacher, in allusion to this church, referring as he did to the devastating fire that had burnt up the former building, laying it in ruins—that in the midst of the desolations, *its spire* still remained preserved from the devouring element, pointing its summit top to heaven—and I would now appropriate that idea to a far higher and grander subject. For amidst all the conflagrations, and trials, and troubles, and perplexities of life, the child of God will still have *the spire of hope* pointing and rising up to Him who dwelleth in heaven—and the desire of the soul will be, in the midst of fiery trials and burnings of heart, to JESUS and to the remembrance of HIS NAME! It is the sweet statement of the Prophet Malachi—and is a very test of the church, and a striking feature of the child of God—"Them that feared the LORD, and that THOUGHT upon HIS NAME!"—and if you have got no higher up in the scale of evidence of being a child of God, I think I am scripturally correct when I say that the fear of God *enacted* in the heart, and thinking on His name, is a token and a proof—and *this* will make you desire to walk morally. It is a mercy to be brought to think upon HIS NAME—to be raised to a hope, and to have a desire to *know* that we are a child of God in CHRIST JESUS. My hearers, it is here, to *this* point, where the doctrines of GRACE bring us. No church in the world holds higher or purer doctrines than the Church of England—and while I delight to sound forth those doctrines—whether it be to my own home flock in the country, or standing in this strange Church before you—I want to show the people that it is not the mere holding high doctrines in the head, but that the very germ and life of Christianity—is, the having CHRIST CRUCIFIED set up in a broken heart, with an *inward* desire to follow CHRIST in the NARROW WAY—(for the way is "narrow!") It is *this* my hearers, that tests the reality of the second birth.

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I now come to the "SATISFACTION" spoken of in the text—every child of God shall be SATISFIED. There shall be no disappointment to the people of God—their desires shall be all granted—God may, God does, and God will keep some of His children a long time in severe exercise! He may grant the desire of *some* much sooner than the desire of *others*, but all His people SHALL be satisfied—"My soul (says David in another Psalm)—wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from HIM!" And I believe it, and I know it, and I therefore preach it without any ifs, buts, or ands—and I preach it with authority, that unless you know what it is to be tried, unless you know what it is to be "driven to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man"—(we have that in Psalm cvii.)—and "are at your wits end"—you will never understand the experience of the Psalmist—"My soul wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." Look, my hearers, at the disappointments of life, look at the trials of life, look at the narrow way in which all God's children must more or less continually walk, and yet *satisfaction* is waiting for them at the end.

Now, have you this feeling of *want*? May I illustrate the point by the prodigal son? None could be worse than that prodigal son, who left his father's house and spent his patrimony in debauchery and sin. He went into a distant country, and after this, that, and the other, we are told in the words of the Spirit of God—"he began to be in want."

"I want to know the SAVIOUR'S LOVE,
I want to fix my heart above,
I want more grace to conquer sin,
I want to feel *new life within*."

That is what the church wants, and we shall have it, for God will satisfy the desire of all His people at His own time, and not one atom of time before. In the Psalms—(though I desire not to separate any one portion of THIS blessed Book from another, for it is *all* precious, it is *all* a treasure)—yet I believe you will generally find that the tried, the exercised, afflicted, cast down people of God—however untaught they may be in mere *human* learning—are scholars in the Book of Psalms. In those blessed portions is the crying and the petitioning, the deep soul exercise, the experience of the depths and of the darkness—in these too are the glimmerings of hope and burstings forth of praise blessedly set forth—and it is in this same Book of Psalms that the triumphant Scripture I am preaching on, is written and engraved—"Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

Now, the fourth point is this—"every living thing"—and I take this accommodationally to refer to the people of God. We are *all* "born in sin." There is no exception here. The Apostle in the Ephesian Epistle states—"And you hath HE quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." The Apostle speaks of his own experience as to that fact. We are all dead in sin; and the quickening must be by SOVEREIGN POWER. God quickens whom HE will. Now we must be *brought* into the LIFE of THE GOSPEL; and I insist upon it, that there can be no full appreciation of the blessings of the *gospel* till we have been condemned under the *law*. I have stated it over and over again to my own flock, that I consider one of the healthiest portions of our service in the morning is the hearing those Ten Commandments, which declare death to you and to me, in every one of them—"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." So that there can be no *perfection in the flesh*. One trip in thought, in word, or deed, makes a man guilty of the *whole*. Now, what does the Apostle Paul say!—"I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Mark the *peculiar* wording of the HOLY GHOST—"When the commandment came." I can understand a moral man, or a Pharisee coming to the commandment; but that will not do; the commandment must come to the Pharisee and unpharisaize him. If at this moment there lay in one of the jails of our country some convicted felon under sentence of death, Mr. Walpole, the Home Secretary, must send the Queen's

pardon to that convicted felon, or he must suffer the penalty of the law. It is in the power of the sovereign to pardon the felon, but the man has been condemned by judge and by jury, the black cap has been put upon the judge's head, the sentence of death has been passed. And so with you and me! and here it is in the graphic statement of the Psalmist—"Let the sighing of the prisoner come before THEE; according to the greatness of Thy power preserve Thou those that are appointed to die." And here I insist upon it, that until we are brought under the condemning, killing power of the law, we are not in a state to wish even for the gospel. "The law was our schoolmaster unto CHRIST"—("to bring us unto"—is not in the Greek.) The Apostle says—"The law was our schoolmaster unto Christ"—that is, we were condemned, and wretched, and guilty—without a leg to stand on, till OMNIPOTENT GRACE brought us to our law-fulfiller—CHRIST is the law-giver and CHRIST is the *law-fulfiller*. Now, what do you know about these things? A man cannot understand the life and liberty of the gospel who has not been condemned under the law. But I was speaking of that statement—"when the commandment came."—Now, may I illustrate this in simple English before you. We can understand a man in debt, and who has *nothing* to pay with. He is surrounded by innumerable creditors, and these creditors apply day after day for payment; and the poor man, not knowing what to do, puts them off, promising to pay on such a day, at such a time—but still no payment is made—at last the sheriff's officer is sent, and full payment is demanded. That—(as I understand it)—is the experience of the Apostle spiritually—"but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."—And, depend on it, till death and condemnation is felt and known in the soul there can be, there will be, no cry for Christ and the gospel. It is Jesus, typified in His own parable, as "a certain Samaritan," who alone can pity and have compassion on the condemned sinner, healing the wounds, pouring in the oil and wine, setting him on his own beast and taking care of him.

Now, my hearers, before I finish, I must allude to the occasion that has brought me here this evening. I stand (as it were,) with a petition in my hand—the subject of this church—(which we open to-day), of its fire—and the other circumstances about it, were so fully stated by my predecessor in this pulpit, this morning, that I feel I can only say, do what you can in this good work. And while I ask you to give your pounds, your shillings, or your pence, on the occasion of the opening of this house of prayer, I would telegraph my petition up before God, that it may please HIM not only to open His hand in a providential way, but that it may specially please HIM to open many a heart to-night under the power of His own SPIRIT by the word, which, like a hammer, breaketh the rock in pieces. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." May we never forget this opening day, and may this house of prayer be a nursery for many, may the gospel be made to sound forth from this pulpit with power to the people assembled within the walls. I stand here a stranger to many in this large assemblage, and all but a stranger to the pastor of the church, not like the preacher in the morning as his old friend—but still I ask you to cheer his heart. All that has occurred on the spot where we are now gathered together has been a heavy trial to him—the desolation of the old church, and the expences of raising this new one, have been a cause of great anxiety—and not only so, but in the midst of all this—(I may quote the words spoken here in the morning)—he has been bowed down by severe domestic affliction and sorrow. Cheer then his heart—and O! that he may in every sense come forth brightened by the fire, as well as those worshipping in this house—may a blessing be upon you, and may *this gospel*, which in weakness, and in fear, and—(in one sense)—in much trembling, I have endeavoured to preach to you, be blessed.

May the hand be opened and may the heavenly treasure be poured into many souls. Job says—"In whose hand is the soul," (that is, the life,) "of every living thing?" And may the "living things" that are assembled, (for the children of God are such,) realize the truth of the text and be satisfied.

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Look at the Master—I do not think I am straining it when I apply the term “living things” to the children of God, for what was said of the HEAD of THE CHURCH—what was declared to the highly honoured woman through whom Christ was to come into the world—“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the HIGHEST shall overshadow thee; therefore that HOLY THING which shall be born of thee shall be called the SON of God.” My hearers, it is a family name! While the eye of faith now pictures the stable in Bethlehem, and drops upon the spot where Christ was born—CHRIST the best gift of God to His people—I remember the stirring words of the prophet—“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders.” That is the best and only sure government—there is no shifting there like our earthly governments—like our own government in Downing Street—there is no change in the government that I am speaking of. He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a NAME written—“KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” And this triumphant Christ, the babe that sat on the knees of that highly honoured female was termed by THE HOLY GHOST, “THAT HOLY THING!” And I am not, I think, straining the text, which forms the material that I am preaching on, when I say that His people are each a “living thing,” and that God *will satisfy “the desire of every living thing.”* And may such of you in this church as are now dead in sin be made to hear THE VOICE—be made alive in CHRIST Jesus!—“Living things!”

I preached to some of you the other evening in the city on that striking passage in the Acts of the Apostles—“They that were with me saw indeed the light and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of HIM that spake to me.” There was the light, and they *saw it*—and *the voice*, but they heard it *not*. And men in these days have got light! Look at the publications and periodicals of the day. But where is *the voice*? Have you heard THE VOICE, which brought life and liberty into the Apostle’s soul? Remember, my hearers, there is a moment coming when we shall rightly understand all these things, when there will be no opposition to the Gospel of our crucified Redeemer, when the grand secret will be discovered and known, when the books will be opened; and you and I shall be there. We have gazed of late with admiring wonder upon that tremendous comet that has charioted his way through the heavens above us, and I have thought as I gazed of an evening in my quiet country home on that wonderful constellation—I have thought, I say—of *another* sight that is to be seen—and then, (to quote the description of it which is given in God’s word)—“When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with HIM, then shall HE sit upon the throne of His glory, and before HIM shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.” What follows in that Scripture I referred to before. And in another passage, “There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations.” O! what a sight to see, and you and I shall be THERE. Now then, mark, life divine is given to the CHURCH. In that striking passage in the Colossians—“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Hidden there, it is all in CHRIST; and God is the Keeper of your life—and again, “When Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with HIM in glory.” Now that applies only to the church. I may quote the Dean of Bristol upon this Scripture. Our English version reads—“If ye then be risen with CHRIST,” but the authority I quote says it may be rendered—“SINCE ye are risen”—therefore it is only to the quickened church the word refers. There is no “if” in the covenant, and the Apostle is addressing a risen and a called people. “Since ye are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.” And I say to this congregation at Herne Hill, if you are risen ones—for I cannot see into your hearts, that is a matter between God and your own consciences—but if you are risen with HIM—quickened by PREVENTING GRACE, then “Your life is hid with Christ in God, and when Christ our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with HIM in glory.” And then follows—“*Mortify therefore your*

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members which are upon the earth." And I insist upon this, the rather, because I know well that the charge—the *false* charge against those who preach the glorious DOCTRINES OF GRACE, is, that we do not insist on a *practical* walk—but I repeat it again—"Mortify therefore your members"—and this together with deadness to the world, and a feeling sense of guilt and sin is the test of GRACE *within us*—of the life of God in the soul. The desire of the Christian is to walk in the fear of God. Is this Antinomian error? "*Let God be true and every man a liar.*"

But I feel that the time is come for me to stop. It is a temptation to me to continue preaching, but in concluding let me read the verses which follow the text, they are so comforting to the child of God. "Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them. The Lord preserveth all them that love Him: but all the wicked will He destroy. My mouth shall speak the praise of The Lord: and let all flesh bless His Holy Name for ever and ever."

In finishing, I would remind you of the morning text and of the triumph always of the minister of the Gospel. "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place." That text is immediately followed by these striking words—and bear with me for a passing instant—"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death: and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" And now, mark the verse which concludes that chapter—"For we are not as many which corrupt"—(or as it is in the Greek, "*deal deceitfully with*")—"the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ"—(or of Him)—and so on the authority of that tremendous word, I must be to-night made of God—to every man and woman now hearing me in Herne Hill Church—either "a savour of death unto death," or "a savour of life unto life"—and as it is written in another Epistle—"But as we were allowed of God to be put in TRUST with the GOSPEL, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts."—Thus I desire to be made FAITHFUL in the pulpit. I feel that I stand here to-night a Trustee of the GOSPEL! and what, I ask, what would you think of a trustee in worldly things who was unfaithful and dishonest to his trust? Would you not file a bill against him in the Court of Chancery? And what can be said of the man entrusted with the Gospel, commissioned to declare the will of God to the legates, if he did not faithfully, honestly, and in the FEAR of God discharge the trust committed to his care, and preach *Free Grace* salvation—and declaring the finished work of the GOD-MAN, proclaim peace and pardon to all God's people through the blood, and the love, and the victory of our all-conquering and sinner-saving CHRIST—O! that the HAND may now be opened—and with our heart's desire fixed on the REDEEMER, may every "living thing" be "satisfied"—satisfied with CHRIST as our ALL and in all.

My hearers, come forward and give towards the cost of this Church—and as I finish, listen to the text—"Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

May God command a blessing on the GOSPEL, for JESUS CHRIST's sake.

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THE EVIL AND ITS REMEDY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 14TH, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great."—Ezekiel ix. 9.

"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."—1 John i. 7.

I SHALL have two texts this morning—the evil and its remedy. "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great;" and "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

We can learn nothing of the gospel, except by feeling its truths—no one truth of the gospel is ever truly known and really learned, until we have tested and tried and proved it, and its power has been exercised upon us. I have heard of a naturalist, who thought himself exceedingly wise with regard to the natural history of birds, and yet he had learned all he knew in his study, and had never so much as seen a bird either flying through the air or sitting upon its perch. He was but a fool although he thought himself exceeding wise. And there are some men who like him think themselves great theologians; they might even pretend to take a doctor's degree in divinity; and yet, if we came to the root of the matter, and asked them whether they ever saw or felt any of these things of which they talked, they would have to say, "No; I know these things in the letter, but not in the spirit; I understand them as a matter of theory, but not as things of my own consciousness and experience." Be assured, that as the naturalist who was merely the student of other men's observations knew nothing, so the man who pretends to religion, but has never entered into the depths and power of its doctrines, or felt the influence of them upon his heart, knows nothing whatever, and all the knowledge he pretendeth to is but varnished ignorance. There are some sciences that may be learned by the head, but the science of Christ crucified can only be learned by the heart.

I have made use of this remark as the preface to my sermon, because I think it will be forced from each of our hearts before we have done, if the two truths which I shall consider this morning, shall come at all home to us with power. The first truth is the greatness of our sin. No man can know the greatness of sin till he has felt it, for there is no measuring-rod for sin, except its condemnation in our own conscience, when the law of God speaks to us with a terror that may be felt. And as for the richness of the blood of Christ and its ability to wash us, of that

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also we can know nothing till we have ourselves been washed, and have ourselves proved that the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God *hath* cleansed us from all sin.

I. I shall begin, then, with the first doctrine as it is contained in the ninth chapter of Ezekiel, the ninth verse,—“The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great.” There are two great lessons which every man must learn, and learn by experience, before he can be a Christian. First, he must learn that sin is an exceeding great and evil thing; and he must learn also that the blood of Christ is an exceedingly precious thing, and is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto it. The former lesson we have before us. O may God, by his infinite spirit, by his great wisdom, teach it to some of us who never knew it before!

Some men imagine that the gospel was devised, in some way or other, to soften down the harshness of God towards sin. Ah! how mistaken the idea! There is no more harsh condemnation of sin anywhere than in the gospel. Ye shall go to Sinai, and ye shall there hear its thunders rolling; ye shall behold the flashing of its terrible lightnings, till, like Moses, ye shall exceedingly fear and quake, and come away declaring that sin must be a terrible thing, otherwise, the Holy One had never come upon Mount Paran with all these terrors round about him. But after that ye shall go to Calvary; there ye shall see no lightnings, and ye shall hear no thunders, but instead thereof, ye shall hear the groans of an expiring God, and ye shall behold the contortions and agonies of one who bore

“All that Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, and none to spare.”

And then ye shall say, “Now, though I never fear nor quake, yet I know how exceedingly great a thing sin must be, since such a sacrifice was required to make an atonement for it. Oh! sinners; if ye come to the gospel, imagining that there ye shall find an apology for your sin, ye have indeed mistaken your way. Moses charges you with sin, and tells you that you are without excuse; but as for the gospel, it rends away from you every shadow of a covering; it leaves you without a cloak for your sin; it tells you that you have sinned wilfully against the Most High God—that ye have not an apology that ye can possibly make for all the iniquities that ye have committed against him; and so far in any way from smoothing over your sin, and telling you that you are a weak creature and, therefore could not help your sin, it charges upon you the very weakness of your nature, and makes that itself the most damning sin of all. If ye seek apologies, better look even into the face of Moses, when it is clothed with all the majesty of the terrors of the law, than into the face of the gospel, for that is more terrible by far to him who seeks to cloak his sin.

Nor does the gospel in any way whatever give man a hope that the claims of the law will be in any way loosened. Some imagine that under the old dispensation God demanded great things of man—that he did bind upon man heavy burdens that were grievous to be borne—and they suppose that Christ came into the world to put upon the shoulders of men a lighter law, something which it would be more easy for them to obey—a law which they can more readily keep, or which if they break, would not come upon them with such terrible threatenings. Ah, not so. The gospel came not into the world to soften down the law. Till heaven and earth shall pass away, not one jot or tittle of the law shall fail. What God hath said to the sinner in the law, he saith to the sinner in the gospel. If he declareth that “the soul that sinneth it shall die,” the testimony of the gospel is not contrary to the testimony of the law. If he declares that whosoever breaketh the sacred law

shall most assuredly be punished, the gospel also demands blood for blood, and eye for eye, and tooth for tooth, and doth not relax a solitary jot or tittle of its demands, but is as severe and as terribly just as even the law itself. Do you reply to this, that Christ has certainly softened down the law? I reply, that ye know not, then, the mission of Christ. What said he himself? The Lord hath said in the law "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" hath Christ softened the law? No. Saith he, "I say unto you, that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." That is no softening of the law. It is, as it were, the grinding of the edge of the terrible sword of Divine justice, to make it sharper far than it seemed before. Christ hath not put out the furnace; he rather seemeth to heat it seven times hotter. Before Christ came sin seemed unto me to be but little; but when he came sin became exceeding sinful, and all its dread heinousness started out before the light.

But, says one, surely the gospel does in some degree remove the greatness of our sin. Does it not soften the punishment of sin? Ah! no. Ye shall appeal to Moses; let him ascend the pulpit and preach to you. He says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and his sermon is dread and terrible. He sits down. And now comes Jesus Christ, the man of a loving countenance. What says he with regard to the punishment of sin? Ah! sir, there was never such a preacher of the fires of hell as Christ was. Our Lord Jesus Christ was all love, but he was all honesty too. "Never man spake like that man," when he came to speak of the punishment of the lost. What other prophet was the author of such dread expressions as these?—"He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire"—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment;" or these—"Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." Stand at the feet of Jesus when he tells you of the punishment of sin, and the effect of iniquity, and you may tremble there far more than you would have done if Moses had been the preacher, and if Sinai had been in the background to conclude the sermon. No, brethren, the gospel of Christ in no sense whatever helps to make sin less. The proclamation of Christ to-day by his minister is the same as the utterance of Ezekiel of old—"The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great."

And now let us endeavour to deal with hearts and consciences a moment. My brethren, there are some here who have never felt this truth. There are many of you who start back affrighted from it. You will go home and represent me as one who delights to dwell on certain dark and terrible things that I suppose to be true—you say within yourselves, "I cannot, I will not, receive that doctrine of sin; I know I am a frail weak creature; I have made a great many mistakes in my life—that I will admit; but still such is my nature, and I therefore could not help it; I am not going to be arraigned before a pulpit and condemned as the chief of criminals; I may be a sinner—I confess I am with all the rest of mankind—but as to my sin being anything so great as that man attempts to describe, I do not believe it; I reject the doctrine." And thinkest thou, my friend, that I am surprised at thy doing so? I know thee who thou art; it is because as yet the grace of God has never touched thy soul that therefore thou sayest this. And here comes the proof of the doctrine with which I started. Thou dost not know this truth, because thou hast never felt it; but if thou hadst felt it, as every true-born child of God has felt it, thou wouldst say, "The man cannot describe its terrors as they are; they must be felt before they can be known, and when felt they are not to be expressed in all their fulness of terror."

But come, let me reason with you for a moment. Your sin is great, although you

think it small. Remember, brother, I am not about to make out that thy sin is greater than mine. I speak to thee, and I speak to myself also, thy sin is great. Follow me in these few thoughts and perhaps thou wilt better understand it. How great a thing is one sin, when according to the Word of God one sin could suffice to damn the soul. One sin, remember, destroyed the whole human race. Adam did but take of the forbidden fruit, and that one sin blasted Eden, and made all of us inheritors of the curse, and caused the earth to bring forth thorns and thistles even unto this day. But it may be said could one sin destroy the soul? Is it possible that one solitary sin could open the gates of hell, and then close them upon the guilty soul for ever, and that God should refuse his mercy, and shut out that soul for ever from the presence of his face? Yes, if I believe my Bible, I must believe that. Oh, how great must my sins be if this is the terrible effect of one transgression. Sin cannot be the little thing that my pride has helped me to imagine it to be. It must be an awful thing if but one sin could ruin my soul for ever.

Think again my friend, for a moment what an imprudent and impertinent thing sin is. Behold! there is one God who filleth all in all, and he is the Infinite Creator. He makes me, and I am nothing more in his sight than an animated grain of dust; and I that animated grain of dust, with a mere ephemeral existence, have the impertinence and imprudence to set up my will against his will! I dare to proclaim war against the Infinite Majesty of heaven. It is a thing so audacious, so infernally full of pride, that one need not marvel that even a sin in the little eye of man, should, when it is looked upon by the conscience in the light of heaven, appear to be great indeed.

But think again, how great does your sin and mine seem, if we will but think of the ingratitude which has marked it. The Lord our God has fed us from our youth up to this day: he has put the breath into our nostrils, and has held our souls in life; he has clothed the earth with mercies and he has permitted us to walk across these fair fields; and he has given us bread to eat and raiment to put on, and mercies so precious that their full value can never be known until they are taken from us; and yet you and I have persevered in breaking all his laws wilfully and wantonly: we have gone contrary to his will; it has been sufficient for us to know that a thing has been God's will, and we have at once run contrary thereunto. Oh, if we set our secret sins in the light of his mercy, if our transgressions are set side by side with his favours, we must each of us say, our sins indeed are exceeding great!

Mark, I am not now addressing myself solely and wholly to those whom the word itself condemns of great sin. We of course do not hesitate for a moment to speak of the drunkard, the whoremonger, the adulterer, and the thief, as being great sinners; we should not spare to say that their iniquity is exceeding great, for it exceeds even the bounds of man's morality, and the laws of our civil government. But I am speaking this day to you who have been the most moral, to you whose outward carriage is everything that could be desired, to you who have kept the Sabbath, to you who have frequented God's house, and outwardly worshipped. Your sins and mine are exceeding great. They seem but little to the outward eye—but if we came to dig into the bowels thereof and see their iniquity, their hideous blackness, we must say of them they are exceeding great.

And again, I repeat it, this is a doctrine that no man can rightly know and receive until he has felt it. My hearer, hast thou ever felt this doctrine to be true—"my sin is exceeding great?" Sickness is a terrible thing, more especially when it is accompanied with pain, when the poor body is racked to an extreme,

so that the spirit fails within us, and we are dried up like a petherd; but I bear witness in this place this morning, that sickness however agonizing, is nothing like the discovery of the evil of sin. I had rather pass through seven years of the most wearisome pain, and the most languishing sickness, than I would ever again pass through the terrible discovery of the terrors of sin. There be some of you who will understand what I mean; for brother, you have felt the same. Once on a time, you were playing with your lusts, and dallying with your sin, and it pleased God to open your eyes to see that sin is exceeding sinful. You remember the horror of that state, it seemed as if all hideous things were gathered into one dread and awful spectacle. You had before loved your iniquities, but now you loathed them—and you loathed yourselves; before, you had thought that your transgressions might easily be got rid of, they were matters that might be speedily washed out by repentance, or purged away by amendment of your life; but now sin seemed an alarming thing, and that you should have committed all this iniquity; life seemed to you a curse, and death, if it had not been for that dreary something after death, would have been to you the highest blessing, if you could have escaped the lashings of your conscience, which seemed to be perpetually whipping you with whips of burning wire. Some of you, perhaps, passed through but a little of this. God was graciously pleased to give you deliverance in a few hours; but you must confess that those hours were hours into which it seemed as if years of misery had been compressed. It was my sad lot for three or four years, to feel the greatness of my sin without a discovery of the greatness of God's mercy. I had to walk through this world with more than a world upon my shoulders, and sustain a grief that so far exceeds all other griefs, as a mountain exceeds a mole hill; and I often wonder to this day how it was, that my hand was kept from rending my own body into pieces through the terrible agony which I felt, when I discovered the greatness of my transgression. Yet, I had not been a greater sinner than any one of you here present, openly and publicly, but heart sins were laid bare, sins of lip and tongue were discovered, and then I knew—oh, that I may never have to learn over again in such a dreadful school this terrible lesson—"The iniquity of Judah and of Israel is exceeding great." This is the first part of the discourse.

II. "Well," cries one, turning on his heel, "there is very little comfort in that. It is enough to drive one to despair, if not to madness itself." Ah friend! such is the very design of this text. If I may have the pleasure of driving you to despair, if it be a despair of your self-righteousness and a despair of saving your own soul, I shall be thrice happy.

We turn therefore from that terrible text to the second one,—the first of John, the first chapter, and the seventh verse;—"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." There lies the blackness; here stands the Lord Jesus Christ. What will he do with it? Will he go and speak to it, and say, "This is no great evil; this blackness is but a little spot?" Oh! no; he looks at it, and he says, "This is terrible blackness, darkness that may be felt; this is an exceeding great evil." Will he cover it up then? Will he weave a mantle of excuse and then wrap it round about the iniquity? Ah! no; whatever covering there may have been he lifts it off, and he declares that when the Spirit of truth is come he will convince the world of sin, and lay the sinner's conscience bare and probe the wound to the bottom. What then will he do? He will do a far better thing than make an excuse or than to pretend in any way to speak lightly of it. He will cleanse it all away, remove it entirely by the power and meritorious virtue of his own blood, which is

able to save unto the uttermost. The gospel does not consist in making a man's sin appear little. The way Christians get their peace is not by seeing their sins shrivelled and shrinking until they seem small to them. But on the contrary; they, first of all, see their sins expanding, and then, after that, they obtain their peace by seeing those sins entirely swept away,—far as the east is from the west.

Now, carrying in mind the remarks I made upon the first text, I call your attention for a few moments to the greatness and beauty of the second one. Note here, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from *ALL* sin." Dwell on the word "all" for a moment. Our sins are great; every sin is great; but there are some that in our apprehension seem to be greater than others. There are crimes that the lip of modesty could not mention. I might go far in this pulpit this morning in describing the degradation of human nature in the sins which it has invented. It is amazing how the ingenuity of man seems to have exhausted itself in inventing fresh crimes. Surely there is not the possibility of the invention of a new sin. But if there be, ere long man will invent it, for man seemeth exceedingly cunning, and full of wisdom in the discovery of means of destroying himself and the endeavour to injure his Maker. But there are some sins that show a diabolical extent of degraded ingenuity—some sins of which it were a shame to speak, of which it were disgraceful to think. But note here: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin." There may be some sins of which a man cannot speak, but there is no sin which the blood of Christ cannot wash away. Blasphemy, however profane, lust, however bestial; covetousness, however far it may have gone into theft and rapine; breach of the commandments of God, however much of riot it may have run, all this may be pardoned and washed away through the blood of Jesus Christ. In all the long list of human sins, though that be long as time, there standeth but one sin that is unpardonable, and that one no sinner has committed if he feels within himself a longing for mercy, for that sin once committed, the soul becomes hardened, dead, and seared, and never desireth afterwards to find peace with God. I therefore declare to thee, O trembling sinner, that however great thine iniquity may be, whatever sin thou mayest have committed in all the list of guilt, however far thou mayest have exceeded all thy fellow-creatures, though thou mayest have distanced the Pauls and Magdalens and every one of the most heinous culprits in the black race of sin, yet the blood of Christ is able now to wash thy sin away. Mark! I speak not lightly of thy sin, it is exceeding great; but I speak still more loftily of the blood of Christ. Great as is thy sin, the blood of Christ is greater still. Thy sins are like great mountains, but the blood of Christ is like Noah's flood; twenty cubits upwards shall this blood prevail, and the top of the mountains of thy sin shall be covered.

Just take the word "all" in another sense, not only as taking in all sorts of sin, but as comprehending the great aggregate mass of sin. Come here sinner, thou with the grey head. What are we to understand in thy case by this word *all*? Bring hither the tremendous load of the sins of thy youth. Those sins are still in thy bones, and thy tottering knees sometimes testify against the iniquities of thy early youth; but all these sins Christ can remove. Now bring hither the sins of thy riper manhood, thy transgressions in the family, thy failures in business, all the mistakes and all the errors thou hast committed in the thoughts of thy heart. Bring them all here; and then add the iniquities of thy frail and trembling age. What a mass is there here! what a mass of sin! Stir up that putrid mass, but put thy finger to thy nostrils first, for thou canst not bear the stench thereof if thou art a man with a living and quickened conscience. Couldst thou bear to read thine own diary if thou hadst written there all thy acts? No; for though thou be the purest of mankind, thy thoughts if they could have been recorded, would now if thou couldst read them, make thee startle and wonder that thou art demon

enough to have had such imaginations within thy soul. But put them all here, and all these sins the blood of Christ can wash away.

Nay, more than that. Come hither ye thousands who are gathered together this morning to listen to the Word of God; what is the aggregate of your guilt? Hither ye have come, men of every grade and class, and women of every age and order; what is the mass of all your united guilt? Could ye put it so that mortal observation could comprehend the whole within its ken, it were as a mountain with a base, broad as eternity, and a summit lofty almost as the throne of the great archangel. But, remember, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin. Let but the blood be applied to our consciences and all our guilt is removed, and cast away for ever—all—none left, not one solitary stain remaining—all gone, like Israel's enemies—all drowned in the Red Sea, so that there was not one of them left, all swept away, not so much as the remembrance of them remaining. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin."

Yet, once more, in the praise of this blood we must notice one further feature. There be some of you here who are saying, "Ah! that shall be my hope when I come to die, that in the last hour of my extremity the blood of Christ will take my sins away; it is now my comfort to think that the blood of Christ *shall* wash, and purge, and purify the transgressions of life." But, mark! my text saith not so; it does not say the blood of Christ *shall* cleanse—that were a truth—but it says something greater than that—it says, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son *cleanseth*"—cleanseth now. And is it possible that *now* a man may be forgiven? Can a harlot *now* have all her sins blotted out of the book of God? And can she know it? Can the thief this day have all his transgressions cast into the sea; and can he know it? Can I, the chief of sinners, this day be cleansed from all my sins, and know it? Can I know that I stand accepted before the throne of God, a holy creature because washed from every sin? Yes, tell it the wide world over, that the blood of Christ can not only wash you in the last dying article, but can wash you now. And let it be known, moreover, that to this there are a thousand witnesses, who, rising in this very place from their seats, could sing—

"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of my Saviour's precious blood,
With divine assurance knowing,
He has made my peace with God."

What would you not give to have all your sins blotted out *now*? Would you not give yourself away to become the servant of God for ever, if *now* your sins should be washed away? Ah, then, say not in your hearts, "What shall I do to obtain this mercy?" Imagine not there is any difficulty in your way. Suppose not there is some hard thing to be done before you can come to Christ to be washed. O beloved! to the man that knows himself to be guilty, there is not one barrier between himself and Christ. Come, soul, this moment come to him that hung upon the cross of Calvary! come now and be washed.

But what meanest thou by coming? I mean this: come thou and put thy trust in Christ, and thou shalt be saved. What is meant by believing in Christ? Some say, that "to believe in Christ is to believe that Christ died for me." That is not a satisfactory definition of faith. An Arminian believes that Christ died for everybody. He must, therefore, necessarily believe that Christ died for him. His believing that will not save him, for he will still remain an unconverted man and yet believe that. To believe in Christ is to trust him. The way I believe in Christ, and I know not how to speak of it, except as I feel it myself, is simply this: I know it is written that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." I do firmly believe that those he came to save he will save. The only question I ask myself is, "Can I put myself among that number whom he has declared he came to save?" Am I a

sinner? Not one that utters the word in a complimentary sense, but do I feel the deep compunction in my inmost soul? do I stand and feel convicted, guilty, and condemned? I do; I know I do. Whatever I may not be, one thing I know I am—a sinner, guilty, consciously guilty, and often miserable on account of that guilt. Well, then, the Scripture says, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”

“And when thine eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;
Thus, at his footstool, bow the knee,
And Israel's God thy peace shall be.”

Let me put my entire trust in the bloody sacrifice which he offered upon my behalf. No dependence will I have in my prayings, my doings, my feelings, my weepings, my preachings, my thinkings, my Bible readings, nor all that. I would desire to have good works, and yet in my good works I will not put a shadow of trust.

“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling.”

And if there be any power in Christ to save I am saved; if there be an everlasting arm extended by Christ, and if that Saviour who hung there was “God over all, blessed for ever,” and if his blood is still exhibited before the throne of God as the sacrifice for sin, then perish I cannot, till the throne of God shall break, and till the pillars of God's justice shall crumble.

Now, sinner what then hast thou to do this morning? If thou feelest thy guilt to be great, cast thyself entirely upon this sacrifice by blood. “But no,” says one, “I have not felt enough.” Thy feelings are not Christ. “No, but I have not prayed enough.” Thy prayers are not Christ, and thy prayers cannot save thee. “No, but I have not repented enough.” Thy repentance may destroy thee, if thou puttest that in the place of Christ. All that thou hast, I repeat this morning, is this—dost thou feel thyself to be a lost, ruined, guilty sinner? Then simply cast thyself on the fact that Christ is able to save sinners and rest there. What! do you say you cannot do it? Oh may God enable you, may he give you faith, sink or swim, to cast yourself on that. “Well! but,” you say, “I may not; being such a sinner?” You may; and God never yet rejected a sinner that sought salvation by Jesus. Such a thing never happened, though the sinner sometimes thought it had. Come, the crumb is under the table; though thou be but a dog come and pick it up; it is a privilege even for the dog to take it; and mercy that is great to thee, is but a crumb to him that gives it freely—come and take it. Christ will not reject thee. And if thou be the chief of sinners that ever lived, only simply trust thyself upon him, and perish thou canst not, if God be God, and if this Bible be the book of his truth. The Lord now help each one of us to come afresh to Christ, and to his name be glory.

THE THRONE OF GRACE.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 7, 1858,

BY THE REV. HUGH ALLEN, M.A.

(Incumbent of St. Jude's, Whitechapel, and Divinity Lecturer of St. Olave's, Old Jewry.)

AT ST. JUDE'S CHURCH, WHITECHAPEL.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Hebrews iv. 16.

THE Bible was written for an express purpose: every portion of the Bible was written for that express purpose, and the purpose is the salvation of the soul. Those who come to the Bible to obtain satisfactory information upon other subjects will be disappointed, and deservedly so; but those that come to the Bible to obtain satisfactory information about the salvation of their souls will not be disappointed. But, then, if they come to the Bible to obtain information about the salvation of their souls they must place confidence in it. It is not only a book written for the express purpose of giving them information how their souls may be saved, but it is a book written avowedly for that purpose—it is a special book written by God for that purpose. It is the only book written avowedly by God for that purpose; it comes, therefore, with plenary authority and power, and it demands from every peruser for its contents the most implicit and complete submission. If men will peruse the pages of the Bible in a suitable manner, such persons will not fail to obtain that very information which is necessary for their salvation and edification: such persons will not fail to see not only their moral condition by nature and by practice, their fallen and sinful state—but such persons will not fail to see the remedy, the all-sufficient remedy for their soul's condition, a remedy in every way sufficient and efficient, a remedy full and complete, provided by God, procured by Christ, and applied by the Holy Ghost. They read in the Scriptures that this salvation is a great salvation, that it is a salvation which is able to do its intended and glorious work for the vilest sinner on the face of the earth, for it is written there, that "Christ is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." We, therefore, invite you to consider with us to-night salvation, as brought before us in the text, and in such a manner as to interest your own hearts in the important and wonderful theme; for it is an important theme to you—the salvation of your soul. It may be of little importance to the worldling, but it is everything to you—the salvation of your soul. It may be of too little importance even to portions of the visible church, but it is everything to you—the salvation of your soul; it is the most important matter to you. And the theme is not only important—it is a wonderful theme. It will open up to your mind, if you will study it, such an amount of precious information regarding God's wonderful love for you, Christ's wonderful efforts for you, and the Holy Ghost's wonderful care about you, that you cannot fail to be influenced by it, if you will but give your heart as well as your ears and your understanding, and your whole soul to the consideration this evening.

My text says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We propose, with the help of the Holy Ghost, to consider, in the exposition of this text—

- I. *Where the sinner is invited?—the throne of grace.*
- II. *Why the sinner is invited to such a throne?*
- III. *For what he is invited to approach such a throne?*
- IV. *How he is instructed to approach it?*
- V. *And, lastly, When he is to do it?*
- I. Let us consider *where?* to what place? the poor sinner is here invited to approach—the throne of grace. A throne is the emblem of authority, is the

emblem of power, and ought also to be the emblem of wisdom. We read of a throne; and we understand very well the idea which a throne suggests to our minds—we understand the idea of a throne of authority, a throne of power, a throne of wisdom, based upon laws, directed by laws, established for the purpose of carrying out laws—a wise throne. But our text invites us to approach a throne, not merely of authority, of power, or of wisdom, but a throne of grace.

In the Scriptures, God is represented upon the heights of Sinai, then he puts forth his laws, the Ten Commandments, amidst lightning and thunder, and on that occasion men had to keep away from the mountain, and if any one dared to approach it, death was the penalty, was the doom! On Mount Tabor, in the New Testament, the Son of God appeared in glory, two heavenly beings came to visit him; but the three privileged disciples, Peter, James, and John, were on that occasion afraid. They were suddenly introduced to this glory. They had been with their Master in the valleys of tribulation through the length and breadth of Palestine, and knew him as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and loved and admired him nevertheless; but in this sudden transition they were influenced by fear—they feared as they entered the bright cloud, for they were astonished and stricken with admiration beyond expression; yet still with all the admiration of Peter, and with all the wonder of the other two, nevertheless there was an awe about the entire matter. But there was another exhibition of Deity, and that was on Calvary's summit—there was the same Son of God, the same Jesus Christ—he was a God all the time as well as a man, though his manhood is brought out on Calvary in a very striking and solemn manner, yet all that time he was God as well as man. Behold him nailed to the accursed tree. He submitted to that. One look from him, and every Roman soldier would have been stricken dead. One expression of his will, and all his adversaries would have been sent suddenly to perdition. But one word of the kind, one expression of the will in that direction he never put forward—he submitted to it all. Why? Because it was necessary. It was fixed in the counsels of eternity to be necessary. It was fixed by the Eternal Three to be necessary, that man may be saved, and yet God's honour maintained. The throne of grace was not to upset the throne of authority, the throne of grace was not to upset the throne of power, the throne of grace was not to upset the throne of wisdom, the throne of grace was not to upset the throne of law, the throne of grace was not to upset the throne of righteousness, and the throne of equity, and the throne of truth, and the throne of judgment—but the throne of grace was to harmonize all, and yet to welcome the sinner to pardon, to peace, to justification, and to complete redemption. *The throne of grace is, in fact, Christ himself.* The allusion is to the atonement, to the blessed truth, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." The throne of grace represents to us the benefit of the death of Christ, the benefit of the obedience of Christ, and that obedience even to the very death of the cross. The throne of grace represents to us all the glorious results of the great work of atonement performed by the Son of the living God. In one expression you have the wonderful result of this wonderful work. The throne of universal authority, the throne of universal power, the throne of universal wisdom, the throne of universal righteousness, the throne of universal equity, the throne of universal truth, becomes, through the atonement—by the blood of Christ sprinkled upon each—a throne of grace; and hence the glorious announcement goes forth—"Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." "Come and let us reason together, and though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed their transgressions from them." Now come unto my throne through my Son and I will give you pardon, I will embrace thee, O sinner, with my arms of everlasting mercy, I will bring thee up from the lowest depths of miserable degradation, guilt, misery, and despair, to the heights of bliss, holiness, and glory. In fine, to simplify the explanation, we would say, that they approach the throne of grace, who come for life and salvation to Almighty God through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But let me ask you—when listening to sermons upon the wonderful results

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of the atonement, or when reading about the death of the Son of God—do you thus understand the design and the end of that death? When you read in the Book of God the many descriptions it contains regarding the obedience of Christ to the law, his sufferings upon the cross for sinners, do you thus understand it, do you thus dwell upon it, do you thus try to realize its wonderful and most momentous importance to thee? Sinner, sinner, I want thee not only to stop and admire, but to go down on thy knees before the God of the Universe, and plead this blood, plead this atonement, plead this redemption, and seek for and obtain pardon, and life, and salvation at this throne of grace.

II. Let us consider in the *second place, why sinners are invited to come to this throne of grace.*

1. You are to bear in mind that the *invitation is to sinners.* Jesus Christ expressly said—"I came not to call the righteous"—the self-righteous, of course—"but sinners to repentance." All the world are sinners, but they do not acknowledge and feel that they are such. I come, says Christ, not to call those who die without acknowledging, or without feeling that they are sinners before God, but even for the vilest and the worst, who do acknowledge and feel their sinfulness—I come to call them.

2. It is written of the Son of man, that he came to seek and to save them them that were lost. "I am a lost man," said once an individual to a very distinguished lady, distinguished in the history of the church and of the country, for her piety and zeal in the spread of evangelical religion—"I am a lost man—it is no use for you to talk to me, no use in your urging upon me this great salvation." She touched him on the shoulder, and said—"I am not sorry to hear you say that. I am glad to hear you say it. Although despair might have had something to do with producing the feeling which called forth the expression, I am glad to hear you say that you feel yourself lost, for the Spirit of the living God must have interposed. You believe you are lost, then hear the word," said she, opening the book—"The Son of man—the Son of God—came to seek and to save them that were lost:—he came to seek and to save you."

Because then they are sinners, helpless sinners—for all sinners are helpless, they cannot do anything for themselves. If they attempt to do anything, they only make themselves worse, they cannot make themselves better; there is no use in their going to Sinai, there is no use in their attempting to mount up the heights of Tabor, in trying to get up an obedience on the one hand, or of presumption on the other—there is no use in their trying themselves to make any efforts in the way of merit before God, before the Great Lawgiver of the Universe—they are helpless, and can only make themselves worse, and, therefore, they are invited by God to come, not to the throne of judgment, or the throne of power, or the throne of authority, or the throne of mere wisdom, but to a throne harmonizing all these—the throne of grace. They are helpless, lost by nature as well as by practice, lost in every sense of the term, there is no help for them, there is nothing but ruin staring them in the face, if they turn to any other place but this throne of grace. If they appeal to mere justice they must perish, if they appeal merely to God's power, they must perish, if they appeal merely to God's authority they must perish, if they appeal merely to God's wisdom they must perish—without an atonement they must perish. There are some who will say, I will appeal to God on the mere ground of his mercy, and say nothing about an atonement: I say, God will not listen to that appeal. God is able, and willing, and ready to listen to the appeal of every sinner who comes to him through Christ, but in no other way. There is no such thing as abstract mercy. There is no such thing as mercy without atonement. Under the old law there was "no remission without the shedding of blood;" and under the new law, there is no salvation without Christ. He, who was the very essence of love, and mercy, and kindness, uttered these solemn words—"I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Why then are they invited to come? Because they are sinners, because they are helpless sinners, because they are utterly ruined sinners.

3. But there is another reason. They are invited to come to the throne of grace because they have a Great High Priest at that throne. There is a Great High Priest pleading for them at that throne. You see an allusion to

this in the context. In the text, there is the word "therefore," which alludes to the context. In the 14th verse it is said—"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." You are to bear in mind the importance of this revelation—that we have a Great high priest at the throne of grace. It is this Great High Priest, who by his atonement has converted the throne of authority into a throne of grace. He is the medium to God—he is the grand way to God—he is *himself*, in fact, *that throne of grace*, and is constantly presenting to his Everlasting Father the case and the condition of every returning penitent; and represents them one after the other; and though the law may accuse them, he answers, I have obeyed the law for them; and although there may be countless charges against them, he cries out, I have suffered for them; and although they may have been again and again warned, and again and again neglected the warning, he still repeats, I suffered, I obeyed, I died for them.

You will perceive that this revelation cuts away all pretensions of priests under the Christian dispensation. Priests were necessary under the Mosaic dispensation until Christ came, because they typified Christ; but when the *Great High Priest himself* came, he set aside those priests for ever. There is an end of priests under the Christian dispensation, therefore it is not right for any man to assume he is a priest under the Christian dispensation; it is blasphemous to assume that he is a *sacrificing priest*. The word priest in the Prayer Book means elder. I need not remind you that at the time the Prayer Book was made, there was a great use of Norman or French words in this country. Our word priest is the contraction of the French word *pêtre*, which is a translation of presbyter, which is the Greek for elder. France supplied a large number of words to England, and they are now, you know, fast bound up in our language, and this was one of the words. Then you are to understand that the word means elder; and when the Prayer Book is revised—as I hope it will be revised—the word priest must be put out, and the word elder must come in. Not that the word was ever used in the Prayer Book Services for sacrificing priest, but because certain people take advantage of it.

With this explanation then, I recur again to my text, and I say, that the context cuts away all pretensions to the office of a sacrificing priest under the Christian dispensation. Christ is the Great High Priest. Once more you are to bear in mind, that the offering was made once and for ever—it was not to be repeated, as the Church of Rome says, that she repeats the offering of Christ in the sacrifice of the mass. That is another specimen of blasphemy, because the Saviour distinctly affirms, that he made his sacrifice once for all—it was never to be repeated. This we find stated fully and satisfactorily in this very Epistle. In the 9th chapter, you read—"Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Here you see it is solemnly stated that our Lord never designed to repeat his one offering; it was not necessary that he should, because it was sufficient, and efficient for the great purpose for which it was designed. And you also find an analogy drawn between our Lord's suffering *once* and men dying *once*—"as it is appointed unto men *once* to die," and it is but *once*—"so Christ suffered but *once*," and cannot suffer again. So, you see, that to attempt to show that the sacrifice of the mass is a true doctrine of Christianity is to contradict the plain statement of Holy Writ which I have read in your hearing.

Then, besides the office of priesthood which Christ sustains for us in heaven, he sustains it not to hand it over to any one else. This also is alluded to in this same Epistle to the Hebrews, when it is said, he took upon himself "an *unchangeable* priesthood," a priesthood that was *not* to be "*transmitted to any successor*" or orders of priests. And you also find, that he was called a priest

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after the order of Melchisedec—a priesthood out of the common order of succession. He left no successor. He put an end to the old priestly office, so that to attempt anything of that kind now, is blasphemous to the very extreme degree.

But to return to the consolation which is given to the sinner, we would say, Is there a sinner in the church hesitating about coming to Christ? Why should you hesitate? Sinner, it is the blood of Christ, which has made a throne of God's perfections, a throne of grace for thee—it is the atonement of Christ, which has brought about this wonderful transformation; so that the throne of the universe is a throne of grace for thee. It is this wonderful work that causes thee to be invited, instead of being repulsed from the Divine presence. There is a High Priest there not to repel thee, but to invite thee, to tell thee that he is pleading for thee, that if you are willing to come to the Father through him, he will take the case in hand and present it before the throne, and you shall receive instantaneous pardon and a blessed assurance. O sinner, sinner, come to the throne of grace, for Jesus is there ready to undertake thy case. He is undertaking it now.

I shall never forget a well known occurrence that happened in Ireland some years ago. A child of Roman Catholic parents, who was being educated at one of the Protestant Scriptural Schools, was encountered by a priest of the Romish faith, and he did all he could to move the child, but in vain. When he attempted to argue with the child, he was discomfited in a moment, the child well acquainted with the Scriptures was more than a match for the priest. At length the priest *thus* encountered the child in the presence of the parents—who were Roman Catholics still, and he said—"I believe by your appearance that you will not live long; I think there are seeds of consumption within, and that you will, therefore, soon come to a sick and dying bed, and you will be very glad to send for me then; but, take care, it will be too late! For if you give me much more trouble—as I fear you may—I beg to tell you, that I will make an example to the parish in your case; and when you come to a sick and dying bed, I will not come near you, even though you may cry out with tears and groans, bring me the priest. The priest will not come to you, and what will you do then?" "I will tell you what I will do," said the child, "I have a High Priest *that can be touched* with the feelings of my infirmities; he is my priest now, he will be my priest then; I do not want you; he will take care of me, and save and bless my immortal and never-dying soul." O beloved hearers, O fellow sinners, take encouragement from these things. You, who have never come to this throne of grace, come now. There is no reason why you should stay away, but there is a reason, and a great one, why you should come. You are helpless sinners, and Jesus never refuses any. The road is open—the way is clear. The Father never refuses any who come to him through his Son. O sinner, behold the throne! Look at it with the eye of faith. Take the word of God with you and come to the throne; go to your knees, or rather prostrate your soul before God, and say—"Father, for Christ's blood, save my soul," and your prayer will reach the throne in an instant, and Christ will present your prayer to the Father, and there will be an answer of peace. The Lord grant it. Amen.

III. But in the *third* place, let us endeavour to investigate *for what purpose we are to come to the throne*. My text says, "To obtain mercy and to find grace in time of need." If we come to the throne to obtain mercy in God's way, we are sure to obtain it. We do not come to put up a petition in order that mercy may come upon certain terms of our own, but to obtain it. It is not like the confessional of a priest. You do not come to the throne of grace to hear what you are to do, and suffer, and give. You do not come to the throne of grace as the dupes of Romanism go to the confessional of the priest, or as the dupes of Tractarianism go to their tractarian priest. You do not come to this throne of grace, as these dupes go to their fellow mortals, but unto One from whom you can obtain mercy, that is, pardon for all your sin—mercy, that is, free pardon for all your sin—mercy, that is, a free pardon for all your sins for ever—mercy, that is, an everlasting pardon—"Your sins and your iniquities he will remember no more." O, how important it is to listen to the invitation, to obtain mercy, to have your conscience quieted, to have your sins remitted, to have your persons justified in the sight of God,

THE THRONE OF GRACE.

"that the peace of God which passeth all understanding may keep your heart and mind."

And then the High Priest. There is in the text something for the unpardoned sinner, but there is something also for the poor and afflicted child of God. "To obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." O children of God, there is a great deal in this text for you. It is however a blessed thing when a sermon is preached to poor sinners. Indeed, I do not know what is the meaning of preaching a sermon, if poor sinners be left out; I cannot understand the meaning of preaching only to saints. Our Lord never did this. He preached to saints, but he preached to sinners as well as to saints; and if he had a special message, it was to the sinner—and therefore the sermon that does not come home to sinners, that does not invite sinners, that does not show the cross of Christ to sinners, that does not encourage sinners to come to Christ, is anything but a New Testament sermon, is anything but a gospel sermon—a sermon formed after the model of Christ's preaching and Christ's conduct. I hear there are some men who do not preach to sinners, but to saints only; well, *I will preach to sinners as long as I live; I will preach to sinners till the day of my death, and to sinners my dying breath shall be—"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."*

But, then, the message of the gospel is also to poor and afflicted ones. Yes, you, who are saved by grace, you still need a Saviour—even if you are justified, for you are still upon the voyage of life, you are still fighting in the armies of God, you are still a pilgrim and a stranger, and in an enemy's country, and you therefore need constant supplies of grace to overcome the world, to enable you to resist the devil, and grace to enable you to resist the allurements of your old Adamite nature. Dear fellow-travellers to Zion, I would encourage you by this passage, I would tell you that the throne of grace is still open for you. You have been preserved, but somehow or other you feel that you have been worsted in many a battle, and though your face is still Zionward, you feel that you have not travelled as you ought to have travelled, not profited as you ought to have profited by the various privileges that surround you, and here you are—you say, I know I am saved, I know I am looking to Jesus, but, O! I want more grace. Indeed you do, and the more you advance in the paths of true religion, the more you will feel the want of it. O, visit that throne!—you can visit it every moment—in private prayer, in the public assembly, and even as you pass along the streets and engaged in business—fervent in spirit, though engaged in business, you can serve the Lord. You are only safe, only honouring Christ, only useful in your day and generation, in proportion as you keep visiting this throne. Do not think that you tease Christ by going frequently to him. The Romish priests say, O! it would be absurd for you to be continually troubling Christ—come to us, and we will present everything. We would tell the priests, that when the Master opens the front door, we never go in at the back; when the Master tells us to knock loudly at the front door, we never skulk in the back way; we will come into the great hall, the presence chamber of the King of kings, where he sits on his glorious throne of grace.

IV. But in the next place we consider—*How we are to come.* The text says we are to come "*boldly.*" First, there is an allusion to the Jewish ritual. Even the high priest went into the holy of holies with great trepidation. He only stopped in there a very short time, and the people were in great anxiety, until they found that the ceremonial was rightly and properly done. The entire Mosaic economy was but a type of Christ and a shadow of the Christian economy; and now all this doubt, and all this trepidation are removed, and everything is open and clear. Under the Jewish economy men came with an offering of blood—they obeyed the Divine law, though they could not precisely understand it. But under the New Testament economy we understand it; the incarnation of the Son of God, the atonement of the Son of God upon Calvary's cross explains it all; everything now is made plain and clear; we can understand now, how God can be just, and the justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus. Popish and tractarian priests hold up the Jewish model, but we say, we have passed beyond that model, we will not go back to the beggerly elements of the Jews—we are Christians, we are free men, we have passed out of the childhood of Judaism,

and entered into the manhood of the Gospel economy—we have escaped out of bondage, into the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. As we have the road clear to the throne, we will never consent to avail ourselves of the intercessions of tractarian priests nor of popish priests, but we will go right to the throne. The Triune God invites us there, and no arts of human invention, and no faithlessness on the part of any Christian minister will ever tempt us to leave our privileges, will ever hinder us from going straight away to the throne of grace to find help in time of need.

Again, we are to go "*boldly*," that is, *not presumptuously, not thoughtlessly*. But alas, alas, I am afraid that many people do pray to God thoughtlessly. I am afraid that many in our public assemblies who confess "we have done that which we ought not to have done, and have left undone that which we ought to have done, and there is no health in us," utter these words thoughtlessly. May God forgive you if it has happened so to-day—seek for forgiveness for yourselves. See that you come to the throne boldly—allow no man to interfere, that is the meaning of the expression, show that you are determined not to be kept back by man. See to it that you not directly upon God's invitation. You are to mind no ministers, no priests, no man whatever, no insinuation that may be made to you either by the world, the flesh, or the devil, for you go to the throne by the invitation of Christ, asking and obtaining pardon, and finding grace to help in time of need. Further, the word *boldly* means to come in the exercise of simple faith. There are some ministers who say you should do this, that, and the other thing before you come to the throne—that you should wait till you are a little better. That is wrong. You are to come just as you are—you are not to try to patch up any righteousness of your own. You are to come with one plea—Jesus died for me, and because he died for me and invites me, and because I feel I am a ruined, lost sinner, I come humbly, but at the same time boldly, that is, in faith, believing God's word. In the Scripture history, there is a striking illustration of this subject; it is to be found in the history of that remarkable woman, Queen Esther, who is, in a certain sense, a type of the Church; the laws of men forbade her, on pain of death, without special invitation to approach the king; but, nevertheless, as God's people were in danger, and herself among the number, at all risks, she approached the throne; and King Ahasuerus was overruled, and constrained by God to overrule the law, and he held out the sceptre, and cried to Esther, "What is thy petition? and what is thy request? and it shall be done unto thee." Here, with instant death in the face, and hardly a prospect of success, the Church makes an effort for mercy; but under the encouragement of my text, the sovereign, and the laws of gospel grace shout forth the cheering words—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

V. But in the last place—*When are you to come?* A time of sickness is a very good time for saints to visit the throne to get comfort. A time of bereavement is a very suitable time for saints to be much engaged in visiting the throne. And I would say the time of health; for in a time of sickness and bereavement there is a tendency in the minds of all unconverted people towards the throne; and at such times also unconverted people make a venture for their soul's safety. But a time of health is a time to go to the throne, aye, and the time of prosperity should be a time to go to the throne. There are many saints who were firm in times of sickness, infirmity, and trial, that have backslided in times of prosperity. This is a special time to go to the throne—it is, indeed, a time of need. But, in fact, every time is a time of need—until we get to heaven we shall never know when we need most; and, therefore, as there is a full fountain of mercy, and a constant supply, our highest wisdom is to continually apply to the throne, continually getting more grace.

But, sinner, you that never obtained mercy yet, what am I to say to you? When is your time to come to the throne? Are you going to put it off to a dying hour? Is it right or fair that you should do so, even supposing that there is no doubt of your finding pardon there? But when you come to your dying hour, how do you know that you may have your senses? There are many diseases which attack the mind as well as the body, and which frequently afflict men when near the point of death. Generally speaking, men

have not that clear use of their mind on a dying bed that some people think is always the case with people that die. O, sinner, if you are depending upon a dying hour, let me exhort you to take care of what you are doing. O, but, say you, I am not, I am depending upon sometime when I shall be more inclined to be serious than I am now. Is that fair? So you determine to enjoy the world, before you will consent to have your soul saved, to give the best of your life and strength to the devil before you consent to serve God. What would you think of the man who came and offered his services to the Queen at sixty when he refused them at twenty-five or thirty! The Queen's government would not listen to such a proposition for a moment. The Queen's officers would say, no, you would not give us your health and strength, and we will not have your old age and infirmities.

But, again, I must endeavour to persuade you to be sensible, and to act like a wise man. You say, you will put it off till some future time, when you may feel a little more seriously inclined than now. You are supposing that you will live many years. Have you any authority for this? You have none. Alas! alas! all authority is the other way. Go to the cemeteries which girt this populous city on every side, and read there on the stones the ages of the dead. O, sinner, sinner, are you not presuming upon what you have no authority to presume upon, in supposing that you have to live many years! You think that you will be serious some other time; but those who know the tendency and deceptions of the human heart, know that the longer people put off being religious the more hardened they become. I know it is a saying that men may live fools, but that none will die fools; but I have known men die fools as well as live fools. Sinner, sinner, I beseech of thee not to act in this way. If the thing be important, and it is, the salvation of thy soul, the sooner it is sought and obtained the better—more honourable to Christ and more like the conduct of a grateful man—more the conduct you ought to exhibit. God invites you to be saved—in common gratitude accept the invitation now, when you can be useful to your fellow-men. How can you be till you are saved yourself! How can you preach the gospel to your children, to your neighbours, to your friends, until you are saved yourself! O, sinner, unsaved sinner, the time for coming to the throne is the present. Oh! how can you tell whether you will see the year out? We have reached the last month but one, and are you sure you will see the year 1859! Only seven weeks, or a little more, are now to run, and the year 1858 is done for ever. Sinner, sinner, unsaved, let me persuade you to-night by the gratitude you owe to God, by the dangers by which your bodily life is surrounded, by the likelihood that you may sicken and die, by the example which the records of the dead suggest to you and present to you every moment, by the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, that never offers the Gospel to-morrow, but says, "to-day;" "Now is the accepted time." There is no to-morrow in the offer of this Gospel in this blessed book. I entreat you to receive it to-night, to-day, by the love of Jesus your gracious High Priest, by the love of the everlasting Father, by the love of the blessed Spirit who wrote the book—"Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." "Acquaint now thyself with God and be at peace with him." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." "Remember now, young man, thy Creator in the days of thy youth." And let it be now, not to-morrow, but to-day. The road to the throne is open, Jesus Christ keeps the road open. Priests, trac-tarians, infidels, and your own evil heart would throw difficulties in the way, but Jesus Christ says, the way is plain. There are difficulties in the road, but they come not from him, they come from yourselves. He is all invitation, all encouragement. The Father encourages, the Son encourages, and the Holy Ghost encourages. Oh! sinner, sinner, let it be done now. Let your feet now run to the throne—let your hands now be stretched towards the throne—let your eyes now be fixed upon the throne, and let your heart pant near the throne—look on with the eye of faith, as you sit in your pews, and behold the blessed Jesus on the throne with pardon, mercy, and grace.

God Almighty grant a blessing to this sermon, and apply it for Christ's sake!

Recently published, a Volume of Sermons, by the Rev. H. Allen, M.A. selected from the Penny Pulpit, bound in cloth, 7s.

The New Park Street Pulpit.

SAMSON CONQUERED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 21ST, 1858, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

"And she said, the Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house."—Judges xvi. 20, 21.

SAMSON is, in many respects, one of the most remarkable men whose history is recorded in the pages of inspiration. He enjoyed a singular privilege only accorded to one other person in the Old Testament. His birth was foretold to his parents by an angel. Isaac was promised to Abraham and Sarah by angels whom they entertained unawares; but save Isaac, Samson was the only one whose birth was foretold by an angelic messenger before the opening of the gospel dispensation. Before his birth he was dedicated to God, and set apart as a Nazarite. Now, a Nazarite was a person who was entirely consecrated to God, and in token of his consecration he drank no wine; and allowed his hair to grow, untouched by the razor. Samson, you may therefore understand, was entirely consecrated to God, and when any saw him, they would say, "That man is God's man, a Nazarite, set apart." God endowed Samson with supernatural strength, a strength which never could have been the result of mere thews and sinews. It was not the fashioning of Samson's body that made him strong; it was not the arm, or the fist with which he smote the Philistines; it was a miracle that dwelt within him, a continued going forth of the omnipotence of God, which made him mightier than thousands of his enemies. Samson appears very early to have discovered in himself this great strength, for "the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan." He judged Israel for thirty years, and gloriously did he deliver them. What a noble being he must have been! See him, when he steps into the vineyard for a moment from his parents. A lion that has been crouching there springs upon him, but he meets him all unarmed, receives him upon his brawny arms and rends him like a kid. See him afterwards, when his countrymen have bound him and taken him down from the top of the rock, and delivered him up to the thousands of the Philistines. He has scarcely come near them, when, without a weapon, with his own foot, he begins to spurn them; and seeing there the jaw-bone of an ass, he takes that ignoble weapon, and sweeps away the men that had helmets about their heads and were girded with greaves of brass. Nor did his vigour fail him in his later life, for he died in the very prime of his days. One of his greatest exploits was performed at this very season. He is entrapped in the city of Gaza. He remains there till midnight; so confident is he in his strength that he is in no hurry to depart, and instead of assailing the guard, and making them draw the bolts, he wrenches up the two posts, and takes away the gate, bar and all, and carries his mighty burden for miles to the top of a hill that is before Hebron. Every way it must have been a great thing to see this man, especially if one had him for a friend. Had one been his foe, the more distant the sight the better, for none could escape from him but those who fled; but to have him for a friend and to stand with him in the day of battle, was to feel that you had an army in a

single man, and had in one frame that which would strike thousands with terror. Samson, however, though he had great physical strength, had but little mental force, and even less spiritual power. His whole life is a scene of miracles and follies. He had but little grace, and was easily overcome by temptation. He is enticed and led astray. Often corrected; still he sins again. At last he falls into the hands of Delilah. She is bribed with an enormous sum, and she endeavours to get from him the secret of his strength. He foolishly toys with the danger, and plays with his own destruction. At last goaded by her importunity, he lets out the secret which he ought to have confided to no one but himself. The secret of his strength lay in his locks. Not that his hair made him strong; but that his hair was the symbol of his consecration, and was the pledge of God's favour to him. While his hair was untouched he was a consecrated man; as soon as that was cut away, he was no longer perfectly consecrated, and then his strength departed from him. His hair is cut away; the locks that covered him once are taken from him, and there he stands a shaveling, weak as other men. Now the Philistines begin to oppress him, and his eyes are burned out with hot iron. How are the mighty fallen! How are the great ones taken in the net! Samson, the great hero of Israel, is seen with a shuffling gait walking towards Gaza. A shuffling gait, I said, because he had just received blindness, which was a new thing to him, therefore, he had not as yet learned to walk as well as those who, having been blind for years, at last learn to set their feet firmly upon the earth. With his feet bound together with brazen fetters—an unusual mode of binding a prisoner, but adopted in this case because Samson was supposed to be still so strong, that any other kind of fetter would have been insufficient—you see him walking along in the midst of a small escort towards Gaza. And now he comes to the very city out of which he had walked in all his pride with the gates and bolts upon his shoulders; and the little children come out, the lower orders of the people come round about him, and point at him—"Samson, the great hero, hath fallen! let us make sport of him!" What a spectacle! The hot sun is beating upon his bare head, which had once been protected by those luxuriant locks. Look at the escort who guard him, a mere handful of men, how they would have fled before him in his brighter days; but now a child might overcome him. They take him to a place where an ass is grinding at the mill, and Samson must do the same ignoble work. Why, he must be the sport and jest of every passer by, and of every fool who shall step in to see this great wonder—the destroyer of the Philistines made to toll at the mill. Ah, what a fall was there, my brethren! We might indeed stand and weep over poor blind Samson. That he should have lost his eyes was terrible; that he should have lost his strength was worse; but that he should have lost the favour of God for awhile; that he should become the sport of God's enemies, was the worst of all. Over this indeed we might weep.

Now, why have I narrated this story? Why should I direct your attention to Samson? For this reason. *Every child of God is a consecrated man.* His consecration is not typified by any outward symbol; we are not commanded to let our hair grow for ever, nor to abstain from meats or drinks. The Christian is a consecrated man, but his consecration is unseen by his fellows, except in the outward deeds which are the result thereof.

And now I want to speak to you, my dear friends, as consecrated men, as Nazarites, and I think I shall find a lesson for you in the history of Samson. My first point shall be *the strength of the consecrated*, for they are strong men; secondly, *the secret of their strength*; thirdly, *the danger to which they are exposed*; and fourthly, *the disgrace which will come upon them if they fall into this danger.*

I. **FIRST, THE STRENGTH OF THE CONSECRATED MAN.** Do you know that the strongest man in all the world is a consecrated man? Even though he may consecrate himself to a wrong object, yet if it be a thorough consecration, he will have strength—strength for evil, it may be, but still strength. In the old Roman wars with Pyrrhus, you remember an ancient story of self-devotion. There was an oracle which said that victory would attend that army whose leader should give himself up to death. Decius the Roman Consul, knowing this, rushed into the thickest of the battle, that his army might overcome by his dying. The prodigies of valour which he performed are proofs of the power of consecration. The Romans at that time seemed to be every man a hero, because every man was a consecrated man. They went to battle with this thought—"I will conquer or die; the name of Rome is written on my heart; for my country I am prepared to live,

or for that to shed my blood." And no enemies could ever stand against them. If a Roman fell there were no wounds in his back, but all in his breast. His face, even in cold death, was like the face of a lion, and when looked upon it was of terrible aspect. They were men consecrated to their country; they were ambitious to make the name of Rome the noblest word in human language; and consequently the Roman became a giant. And to this day let a man get a purpose within him, I care not what his purpose is, and let his whole soul be absorbed by it, and what will he not do? You that are "everything by turns and nothing long," that have nothing to live for, soulless carcases that walk this earth and waste its air, what can you do? Why nothing. But the man who knows what he is at, and has his mark, speeds to it "Like an arrow from a bow shot by an archer strong." Nought can turn him aside from his design. How much more is this true if I limit the description to that which is peculiar to the Christian—consecration to God! Oh! what strength that man has who is dedicated to God! Is there such an one here? I know there is. I know that there be many who have consecrated themselves to the Lord God of Israel in the secret of their chamber; and who can say in their hearts,

"Tis done; the great transaction's done
I am my Lord's, and he is mine.
He drew me, and I followed on,
Glad to obey the voice divine."

Now, the man that can say that, and is thoroughly consecrated to God; be he who he may or what he may, he is a strong man, and will work marvels.

Need I tell you of the wonders that have been done by consecrated men? You have read the stories of olden times, when our religion was hunted like a partridge on the mountains. Did you never hear how consecrated men and women endured unheard-of pangs and agonies? Have you not read how they were cast to the lions, how they were sawn in sunder, how they languished in prisons, or met with the swifter death of the sword? Have you not heard how they wandered about in sheeps' skins and goats' skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy? Have you not heard how they defied tyrants to their face, how, when they were threatened, they dared most boldly to laugh at all the threats of the foe—how at the stake they clapped their hands in the fire, and sang psalms of triumph when men, worse than fiends, were jeering at their miseries? How was this? What made women stronger than men, and men stronger than angels? Why this,—they were consecrated to God. They felt that every pang which rent their heart was giving glory to God, that all the pains they endured in their bodies were but the marks of the Lord Jesus, whereby they were proven to be wholly dedicated unto him. Nor in this alone has the power of the consecrated ones been proved. Have you never heard how the sanctified ones have done wonders? Read the stories of those who counted not their lives dear unto them, that they might honour their Lord and Master by preaching his Word, by telling forth the gospel in foreign lands. Have you not heard how men have left their kindred and their friends, and all that life held dear—have crossed the stormy sea, and have gone into the lands of the heathen, where men were devouring one another? Have you not known how they have put their foot upon that country, and have seen the ship that conveyed them there fading away in the distance, and yet without a fear have dwelt amongst the wild savages of the woods, have walked into the midst of them, and told them the simple story of the God that loved and died for man? You must know how those men have conquered, how those, who seemed to be fiercer than lions, have crouched before them, have listened to their words, and have been converted by the majesty of the gospel which they preached. What made these men heroes? What enabled them to rend themselves away from all their kith and kin, and banish themselves into the land of the stranger? It was because they were consecrated, thoroughly consecrated to the Lord Jesus Christ. What is there in the world which the consecrated man cannot do? Tempt him; offer him gold and silver; carry him to the mountain top, and show him all the kingdoms of the world, and tell him he shall have all these if he will bow down and worship the god of this world. What saith the consecrated man? "Get thee behind me, Satan; I have more than all this which thou dost offer me; this world is mine, and worlds to come; I despise the temptation; I will not bow before thee." Let men threaten a consecrated man, what does he say? "I fear God, and,

therefore, I cannot fear you; if it be right in your sight to obey man rather than God, judge ye; but, as for me, I will serve none but God." You may, perhaps, have seen in your life a consecrated man. Is he a public character? What cannot he do? He preaches the gospel, and at once a thousand enemies assail him; they attack him on every side; some for this thing, and some for that; his very virtues are distorted into vices, and his slightest faults are magnified into the greatest crimes. He has scarce a friend; the very ministers of the gospel shun him; he is reckoned to be so strange that every one must avoid him. What does he do? Within the chamber of his own heart he holds conference with his God, and asks himself this question—am I right? Conscience gives the verdict,—yes, and the Spirit bears witness with his spirit that conscience is impartial. "Then," says he, "come fair, come foul, if I am right,—neither to the right hand nor to the left will I turn." Perhaps he feels in secret what he will not express in public. He feels the pang of desertion, obloquy, and rebuke; he cries—

"If on my face, for thy dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If thou'lt remember me."

As for himself in public, none can tell that he careth for any of these things; for he can say with Paul—"None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me that I may win Christ and finish my course with joy." What cannot a consecrated man do? I do believe if he had the whole world against him, he would prove more than a match for them all. He would say—"Heaps upon heaps, with the jaw-bone of an ass, have I slain my thousand men." I care not how violent may be his foe; nor how great may be the advantage which that foe may get on him: though the lion may have crouched for the spring, and may be leaping upon him, yet will he rend him as a kid, for he is more than a conqueror through him that loved him. He is alone such, who is wholly consecrated unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

"But," says some one, "can we be consecrated to Christ? I thought that was for ministers only." Oh, no, my brethren; all God's children must be consecrated men. What are you? Are you engaged in business? If you are what you profess to be, your business must be consecrated to God. Perhaps you have no family whatever, and you are engaged in trade, and are saving some considerable sum a-year; let me tell you the example of a man thoroughly consecrated to God. There lives in Bristol, (name unknown), a man whose income is large; and what does he do with it? He labours in business continually that this income may come to him, but of it, every farthing every year is expended in the Lord's cause except that which he requires for the necessities of life. He makes his necessities as few as possible, that he may have the more to give away. He is God's man in his business. I do not exhort you to do the same. You may be in a different position; but a man who has a family, and is in business, should be able to say—"Now, I make so much from my business; my family must be provided for—but I seek not to amass riches. I will make money for God and I will spend it in his cause. Did I not say, when I joined the church—

"All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be for ever thine;
Whate'er my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign."

And if I said it, I meant it." I do not understand some Christian people who sing that hymn, and then pinch, screw, and nip anything when it comes to God's cause. If I sing that, I mean it. I would not sing it unless I did. If I join the church, I understand that I give myself and all that I have up to that church; I would not make a lying profession; I would not make an avowal of a consecration which I did not mean. If I have said, "I am Christ's;" by his grace I will be Christ's. Brethren, you in business may be as much consecrated to Christ as the minister in his pulpit; you may make your ordinary transactions in life a solemn service of God. Many a man has disgraced a cassock, and many another has consecrated a smock-frock: many a man has defiled his pulpit cushions, and many another has made a cobbler's lapstone holiness unto the Lord. Happy the man who is consecrated, unto the Lord; where'er he is, he is a consecrated man, and he shall do wonders

It has often been remarked that in this age we are all little men. A hundred years ago, or more, if we had gone through the churches, we might have readily found a number of ministers of great note. But now we are all little men, the drivelling sons of nobodies; our names shall never be remembered, for we do nothing to deserve it. There is scarce a man alive now upon this earth; there are plenty to be found who call themselves men, but they are the husks of men, the life has gone from them, the precious kernel seems to have departed. The littleness of Christians of this age results from the littleness of their consecration to Christ. The age of John Owen was the day of great preachers; but let me tell you, that that was the age of great consecration. Those great preachers whose names we remember, were men who counted nothing their own: they were driven out from their benefices, because they could not conform to the Established Church, and they gave up all they had willingly to the Lord. They were hunted from place to place; the disgraceful five-mile act would not permit them to come within five miles of any market town; they wandered here and there to preach the gospel to a few poor sheep, being fully given up to their Lord. Those were foul times; but they promised they would walk the road fair or foul, and they did walk it knee deep in mud; and they would have walked it if it had been knee deep in blood too. They became great men; and if we were, as they were, wholly given up to God—if we could say of ourselves, "From the crown of my head to the sole of my foot, there is not a drop of blood that is not wholly God's; all my time, all my talents, everything I have is God's"—if we could say that, we should be strong like Samson, for the consecrated must be strong.

II. Now, in the second place, THE SECRET OF THEIR STRENGTH. What makes the consecrated man strong? Ah! beloved; there is no strength in man of himself. Samson without his God was but a poor fool indeed. The secret of Samson's strength was this—as long as he was consecrated he should be strong; so long as he was thoroughly devoted to his God, and had no object but to serve God, (and that was to be indicated by the growing of his hair) so long, and no longer, would God be with him to help him. And now you see, dear friends, that if you have any strength to serve God, the secret of your strength lies in the same place. What strength have you save in God? Ah! I have heard some men talk as if the strength of free will, of human nature, was sufficient to carry men to heaven. Free will has carried many souls to hell, but never a soul to heaven yet. No strength of nature can suffice to serve the Lord aright. No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost. No man can come to Christ except the Father that hath sent Christ doth draw him. If, then, the first act of Christian life is beyond all human strength, how much more are those higher steps far beyond any one of us? Do we not utter a certain truth when we say in the words of Scripture, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." I think every one who has a really quickened soul will sooner or later be made to feel this. Ay! I question whether a man can be converted a day without finding out his own weakness. It is but a little space before the child finds that he can stand alone so long as God his Father takes him by the arms and teaches him to go, but that if his Father's hand be taken away he has no power to stand, but down he falls at once. See Samson without his God, going out against a thousand men. Would they not laugh at him? and with scarcely time to express his terror, he would flee, or be rent in pieces. Imagine him without his God, locked up in Gaza, the gates fast closed. He goes out into the streets to escape; but how can he clear a passage? He is caught like a wild bull in a net; he may go round and round the walls, but where shall be his deliverance? Without his God he is but as other men. The secret of his strength lies in his consecration, and in the strength which is its result. Remember, then, the secret of your strength. Never think that you have any power of your own; rely wholly upon the God of Israel; and remember that the channel through which that strength must come to you must be your entire consecration to God.

III. In the third place, What is THE PECULIAR DANGER OF A CONSECRATED MAN? His danger is that his locks may be shorn, that is to say, that his consecration may be broken. As long as he is consecrated he is strong; break that, he is weak as water. Now there are a thousand razors with which the devil can shave off the locks of a consecrated man without his knowing it. Samson is sound asleep; so clever is the barber that he even lulls him to sleep as his fingers move across the pate, the fool's pate, which he is making bare. The devil is cleverer far than even

the skilful barber; he can shave the believer's locks while he scarcely knows it. Shall I tell you with what razors he can accomplish this work? Sometimes he takes the sharp razor of *pride*, and when the Christian falls asleep and is not vigilant, he comes with it and begins to run his fingers upon the Christian's locks, and says, "What a fine fellow you are! What wonders you have done! Didn't you rend that lion finely? Wasn't it a great feat to smite those Philistines hip and thigh? Ah! you will be talked-of as long as time endures for carrying those gates of Gaza away. You need not be afraid of anybody." And so on goes the razor, lock after lock falling off, and Samson knows it not. He is just thinking within himself, "How brave am I! How great am I!" Thus works the razor of pride—cut, cut, cut away—and he wakes up to find himself bald, and all his strength gone. Have you never had that razor upon your head? I confess I have on mine. Have you never, after you have been able to endure afflictions, heard a voice saying to you, "How patient you were!" After you have cast aside some temptation, and have been able to keep to the unswerving course of integrity, has not Satan said to you, "That is a fine thing you have done; that was bravely done." And all the while you little knew that it was the cunning hand of the evil one taking away your locks with the sharp razor of pride. For mark, pride is a breach of our consecration. As soon as I begin to get proud of what I do, or what I am, what am I proud of? Why, there is in that pride the act of taking away from God his glory. For I promised that God should have all the glory, and is not that part of my consecration? and I am taking it to myself. I have broken my consecration; my locks are gone, and I become weak. Mark this, Christian—God will never give thee strength to glorify thyself with. God will give thee a crown, but not to put on thine own head. As sure as ever a Christian begins to write his feats, and his triumphs upon his own escutcheon, and take to himself the glory, God will lay him level with the dust.

Another razor he also uses is *self-sufficiency*. "Ah," saith the devil as he is shaving away your locks, "You have done a very great deal. You see they bound you with green withes, and you snapped them in sunder, they merely smelt the fire and they burst. Then they took new ropes to bind you; ah! you overcame even them; for you snapped the ropes in sunder as if they had been a thread. Then they weaved the seven locks of your head, but you walked away with loom and web too, beam and all. You can do anything, don't be afraid: you have strength enough to do anything; you can accomplish any feat you set your will upon." How softly the devil will do all that; how will he be rubbing the poll while the razor is moving softly along and the locks are dropping off, and he is treading them in the dust. "You have done all this, and you can do anything else." Every drop of grace distils from heaven. O my brethren, what have we that we have not received? Let us not imagine that we can create might wherewith to gird ourselves. "All my springs are in thee." The moment we begin to think that it is our own arm that has gotten us the victory, it will be all over with us—our locks of strength shall be taken away, and the glory shall depart from us. So, you see, self-sufficiency, as well as pride, may be the razor with which the enemy may shave away our strength.

There is yet another, and a more palpable danger still. When a consecrated man begins to *change his purpose in life and live for himself*—that razor shaves clean indeed. There is a minister; when he first began his ministry he could say, "God is my witness I have but one object, that I may free my skirts from the blood of every one of my hearers, that I may preach the gospel faithfully and honour my Master." In a little time, tempted by Satan, he changes his tone and talks like this, "I must keep my congregation up. If I preach such hard doctrine, they won't come. Did not one of the newspapers criticise me, and did not some of my people go away from me because of it? I must mind what I am at. I must keep this thing going. I must look out a little sharper, and prune my speech down. I must adopt a little gentler style, or preach a new-fashioned doctrine; for I must keep my popularity up. What is to become of me if I go down? People will say, 'Up like a rocket, down like the stick;' and then shall all my enemies laugh." Ah, when once a man begins to care so much as a snap of the finger about the world, it is all over with him. If he can go to his pulpit, and say, "I have got a message to deliver; and whether they will hear or whether they will not hear, I will deliver it as God puts it into my mouth; I will not change the dot of an i, or the cross of a t for the biggest man that lives, or to bring in the mightiest

congregation that ever sat at minister's feet"—that man is mighty. He does not let human judgments move him, and he will move the world. But let him turn aside, and think about his congregation, and how that shall be kept up; ah Samson! how are thy locks shorn? What canst thou do now? That false Delilah has destroyed thee—thine eyes are put out, thy comfort is taken away, and thy future ministry shall be like the grinding of an ass around the continually revolving mill; thou shalt have no rest or peace ever afterwards. Or let him turn aside another way. Suppose he should say, "I must get preferment, or wealth, I must look well to myself, I must see my nest feathered, that must be the object of my life." I am not now speaking of the ministry merely, but of all the consecrated; and as sure as ever we begin to make *self* the primary object of our existence our locks are shorn. "Now," says the Lord, "I gave that man strength, but not to use it for himself. Then I put him into a high position, but not that he might clothe himself about with glory; I put him there that he might look to my cause, to my interests; and if he does not do that first, down he shall go." You remember Queen Esther: she is exalted from being a simple humble maiden, to become the wife of the great monarch—Ahasuerus. Well, Haman gets a decree against her nation, that it shall be destroyed. Poor Mordecai comes to Esther, and says, "You must go in to the king and speak to him." "Well," says she, "but if I do I shall die." "Ah," says he, "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther was not made Queen Esther that she might make herself glorious, but that she might be in a position to save the Jews; and now if she prefers herself before her country then it is all over with her—Vashti's fate shall be as nothing compared with her destruction.

And so, if you live in this world, and God prospers you, you get perhaps into some position, and you say, "Here I am; I will look out for myself; I have been serving the church before, but now I will look to myself a little." "Come, come," says human nature; "you must look after your family," (which means, you must look after yourself). Very well, do it sir, as your main object, and you are a ruined man. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these shall be added to you." If you keep your eye single, your whole body shall be full of light. Though you seemed as if you had shut out half the light by having that single eye, yet your body shall be full of light. But begin to have two masters, and two objects to serve, and you shall serve neither; you shall neither prosper for this world, nor for that which is to come. Oh, Christian, above all things take care of thy consecration. Ever feel that thou art wholly given up to God, and to God alone.

IV. And now, lastly, there is **THE CHRISTIAN'S DISGRACE**. His looks are cut off. I have seen him, young as I am, and you with grey hairs upon your brows have seen him oftener than I; I have seen him in the ministry. He spake like an angel of God; many there were that regarded him, and did hang upon his lips; he seemed to be sound in doctrine and earnest in manner. I have seen him turn aside; it was but a little thing,—some slight deviation from the ancient orthodoxy of his fathers, some slight violation of the law of his church. I have seen him, till he has given up doctrine after doctrine, until, at last, the very place wherein he preached has become a bye-word and a proverb; and the man is pointed out by the grey-headed sire to his child as a man who is to be looked upon with suspicion; who, if he lectures, is to be heard with caution; and if he preaches, is not to be listened to at all. Have you not seen him? What disgrace was there! What a fall! The man who came out in the camps of Dan, and seemed to be moved by the Spirit of the Lord, has become the slave of error. He has gone into the very camps of the enemy, and there he is now, grinding in the mill for the Philistine, whom he ought to have been striking with his arm. Now there are two ways of accounting for this. Such a man is either a thorough hypocrite or a fallen believer. Sometimes, people say of persons who turn aside to sin, "There now; look, there is a Christian fallen,—a child of God fallen." It is something like the vulgar, when at night they see a bright light in the sky, and say, "Ah, there is a star fallen." It was not a star; the stars are all right. Take a telescope; they are every one there. The Great Bear has not lost a star out of its tail; and if you look, there is the belt of Orion all safe, and the dagger has not dropped out of it. What is it, then? We do not know exactly what it is. Perhaps it may be a few

gases up there for a little while, that have burst, and that is all; or some wandering substance cast down,—and quite time that it should be. But the stars are all right. So, depend upon it, the children of God are always safe. Now these men who have turned aside and broken their consecration vow, are pointed at as a disgrace to themselves and dishonour to the church. And you who are members of Christ's church, you have seen men who stood in your ranks as firm soldiers of the cross, and you have noticed them go out, from us, "because they were not of us," or like poor Samson, you have seen them go to their graves with the eyes of their comfort put out, with the feet of their usefulness bound with brazen fetters, and with the strength of their arms entirely departed from them. Now, do any of you wish to be backsliders? Do you wish to betray the holy profession of your religion? My brethren, is there one among you who this day makes a profession of love to Christ, who desires to be an apostate? Is there one of you who desires like Samson to have his eyes put out, and to be made to grind in the mill? Would you, like David, commit a great sin, and go with broken bones to the grave? would you, like Lot, be drunken, and fall into lust? No, I know what you say, "Lord, let my path be like the eagle's flight; let me fly upwards to the sun, and never stay and never turn aside. Oh, give me grace that I may serve thee, like Caleb, with a perfect heart, and that from the beginning even to the end of my days, my course may be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Ay, I know what is your desire. How, then, shall it be accomplished? Look well to your consecration; see that it is sincere; see that you mean it, and then look up to the Holy Spirit, after you have looked to your consecration, and beg of him to give you daily grace; for as day-by-day the manna fell, so must you receive daily food from on high. And, remember, it is not by any grace you have in you, but by the grace that is in Christ, and that must be given to you hour by hour, that you are to stand, and having done all, to be crowned at last as a faithful one, who has endured unto the end. I ask your prayers that I may be kept faithful to my Lord; and on the other hand, I will offer my earnest prayers, that you may serve him while he lends you breath, that when your voice is lost in death, you may throughout a never ending immortality, praise him in louder and sweeter strains.

And as for you that have not given yourselves to God, and are not consecrated to him, I can only speak to you as to Philistines, and warn you, that the day shall come when Israel shall be avenged upon the Philistines. You may be one day assembled upon the roof of your pleasures, enjoying yourselves in health and strength; but there is a Samson—called Death, who shall pull down the pillars of your tabernacle, and you must fall and be destroyed—and great shall be the ruin. May God give you grace that you may be consecrated to Christ; so that living or dying, you may rejoice in him, and may share with him the glory of his Father.

END OF VOLUME IV.

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